ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY AND ALCOHOL USE IN KNOWLEDGE-INTENSIVE WORKPLACES

by

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Abstract

The use of alcohol is an integral social act in many cultures and societies. The reasons for its use, as well as its mental and physical effects on people, have been a topic of academic interest for decades. This thesis examines the relationship between the work lives of individuals and their use of alcohol. At a more specific level, the thesis examines the relationship between alcohol use and the concept of organisational identity. Using data collected from interviews with members of a knowledge-intensive workplace, findings are presented that illustrate how alcohol use can be understood as an important part of processes of organisational identification, and how workers’ alcohol use can be affected by an organisation's identity itself. The theoretical implications of these findings are numerous. Firstly, these findings suggest that organisational concepts, such as organisational identity, can be exceptionally useful in gaining an understanding of the reasons why individuals use alcohol in the ways that they do. In addition, the findings suggest that knowledge-intensive workplaces represent a valuable site for further advancing understandings of the work-alcohol relationship. Finally, it is argued that alcohol use in many situations should be understood as a part of individuals’ organisational life, and not just a product or outcome of their participation in an organisation.
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CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

As a young adult in New Zealand, the reasons behind people’s use of alcohol have always been something that I was particularly curious about. From seeing alcohol used by my teenage friends during high school, through to its use at parties and social occasions at university, to my parents’ use of alcohol at home as an accompaniment to meals, I have often found myself wondering why it is that alcohol is used in different ways by different people.

The reasoning behind people’s use of alcohol as a means of altering their state of consciousness in particular (i.e. getting ‘drunk’, ‘wasted’, ‘hammered’, and so forth) has always been an area of curiosity for me. Unlike most of my friends, I did not start drinking until I was about 18 years old. I had never really felt an attraction to its use or its effects. Having had a bit more experience with alcohol and its effects over the last few years, I now have a greater understanding of how it might be construed as an enjoyable activity. However, I still find it difficult to understand the motives and reasoning of (what seemed to be during my time at university) the large group of students who consistently and frequently used alcohol heavily to get drunk.

This curiosity (or lack of understanding as the case may be) has been the prime motivation for the thesis I present here. For my Master’s thesis, I wanted to go some way to exploring my own personal curiosity about the reasons for people’s alcohol use (defined here as the consumption of alcohol). As I was to find out from my initial research of the literature, there were, from a scholarly perspective, a significant number of unanswered questions regarding peoples’ use of alcohol. In
particular, investigations of the link between people’s work (the focus of my management studies over the last few years) and their use of alcohol was fairly sparse. Moreover, investigations that sought to investigate the actual perceptions and thoughts of ‘drinkers’ / ‘non-drinkers’ themselves about this ‘work-alcohol relationship’ were even fewer in number.

In order to address this gap, I sought to design and carry out an empirical inquiry into how exactly the use of alcohol might be related to people’s work lives. For example, how alcohol might be used as part of work-based social events, as a means of developing relationships with workmates, or as a means of escaping negative emotions induced by one’s work. Upon deeper investigation, I began to wonder how the concept of ‘organisational identity’ (a concept that I had begun to take an interest in prior to beginning my Master’s work) might be used as a ‘frame’ for understanding people’s use of alcohol.

The following thesis represents my attempt to link the concept of organisational identity to individuals’ alcohol use. The first main section reviews the existing academic literature on the three main ‘strands’ of knowledge that I was hoping to ‘weave together’; alcohol, organisational identity, and knowledge-intensive workplaces (KIWs). In this section, I present my argument as to why I see organisational identity as a useful framework for understanding alcohol use, and also why K IWs represent a valuable site for developing such an understanding. The second main section of the thesis outlines the design of my empirical inquiry that I hoped would allow me to theorise alcohol use as a part of processes of organisational identification. I decided to adopt a constructivist ontology and subsequently, a
qualitative, interview-based methodology for collecting data. I believed that this approach would be effective in addressing the lack of research that directly documented the perceptions, attitudes and thoughts of ‘drinkers’ (and ‘non-drinkers’) themselves. The third main section of the thesis presents the findings that emerged from analysis of the interview data. The Findings section illustrates how alcohol use might be construed as part of processes of organisational identification. Following this, the relevance of the findings for the broader theory and literature on organisational identity, KIWs, and general alcohol theory are discussed and explored.

There are three overarching insights that emerged from this study. The first, is that alcohol use and the reasons for its use should certainly be considered as part of a much broader system of social processes and institutions. In particular, organisations and ‘work’ life are shown here to be important factors in coming to understand people’s use of alcohol. More specifically, the use of an organisational identity framework for understanding alcohol use is also argued here to be effective, with much of the interviewee’s alcohol use able to be understood as part of processes of organisational identification. Finally, it would seem from the findings that knowledge-intensive workplaces certainly represent a valuable site for further developing theories of the work-alcohol relationship.
CHAPTER 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

What I immediately realised about my research topic was that it was an attempt to bring together a number of different concepts. As a result, there was a need to investigate a wide range of literature. Thus, the following review has been structured to reflect my three main areas of interest for this thesis; alcohol, organisational identity, and knowledge-intensive work. The review structure can be diagrammatically illustrated as follows:

Figure 1: Literature review structure
Alcohol

Over the course of my reading, I began to get the impression that alcohol is perhaps one of the most popular subjects in academic research. While I am sure that anyone embarking on a thesis shares this sentiment, it is still quite astounding, and as a new researcher, somewhat intimidating, how much has been written on the topic. Nevertheless, I began the process of reading quite widely around the topic of alcohol, with a particular focus on literature that examined the relationship between alcohol use and work life. I eventually began to develop a conceptual understanding of the ways in which alcohol has been studied by various authors.

The following review of the alcohol literature is structured in accordance with my own conceptual understanding of the field. First, a very brief history of studies of alcohol use will be presented in order to show that drinking activity is certainly not ‘new’ to human societies, and also to illustrate some of the functional purposes alcohol has served for people over time. This sub-review will deal largely with anthropological and sociological studies of alcohol use. A review of the alcohol literature in the field of public health will then be presented. Through discussion of public health research, I hope to show why it is that alcohol use is an issue of concern for researchers and for society in general. In the public health section, I will also examine the ‘binge drinking’ discourse that pervades many public health accounts of people’s drinking, and argue why this discourse alone is not suitable for understanding people’s use of alcohol. Following this, a review of those studies that can be grouped under the ‘work-alcohol’ label will be presented. It is within this
work-alcohol’ paradigm that my own research study is situated, and as a result, this aspect of my review of the alcohol literature will be the major focus.

Alcohol in Society

Since ancient times, the consumption of alcohol has often assumed functional roles in human societies. As Mandelbaum (1965) points out, ‘in many societies, drinking behavior is considered important to the whole social order, and so drinking is defined and limited in accordance with fundamental motifs of the culture’ (p. 281). An example of the ‘functional’ uses of alcohol can be seen in the common perception of alcohol as a ‘social lubricant’ in many societies (Trice & Roman, 1978) – ‘a mechanism to ease feelings of anxiety and nervousness during social interactions’ (Monahan & Lanutti, 2000, p. 175). It is argued by such individuals that the act of consuming alcohol allows people unfamiliar with one another to more easily form new relationships, because the inebriating effects of alcohol use can (or are at least perceived by the users to) cause individuals to be more relaxed in their demeanour, and thus make each other appear more talkative, relaxed, and approachable (Critchlow, 1986; Norris, 1994).

Alcohol use is also seen by many as a way of relieving stress and as a means for relaxation (Frone, 1999), or as a ‘social punctuation mark’ that demarcates the time and space between work and play, and vice-versa (Honigmann, 1963). It must also be acknowledged that alcohol, like other drugs, can induce pleasurable feelings and sensations in the user, even if such effects are only temporary and can in the long-term be harmful to the physical health of the individual (Duff, 2004; Zajdow, 2010).
What is apparent throughout the above discussions is that alcohol use is an activity that is laden with socially constructed meaning. That is, alcohol use is an act where meaning and purpose is highly subjective and determined differently by different individuals and groups. As Mandelbaum (1965) so accurately points out:

*When a man lifts a cup, it is not only the kind of drink that is in it, the amount he is likely to take, and the circumstances under which he will do the drinking that are specified in advance for him, but also whether the contents of the cup will cheer or stupefy, whether they will induce affection or aggression, guilt or unalloyed pleasure. These and many other cultural definitions attach to the drink even before it touches the lips (p. 282).*

It is clear then that just as much as an individual experiences the chemical effect of the alcoholic substance, he/she also ‘experiences’ his/her, and the broader collective’s, own expectations of drinking and alcohol use when performing the drinking act (Critchlow, 1986). Thus, the act of drinking might ‘feel’ very different for an individual who is part of a society where alcoholic beverages are primarily seen, for example, as an intoxicating psychoactive substance, than it will for an individual in a society where alcoholic beverages are seen, as another example, as a staple of an individual’s diet (Room, 1997).

A humorous portrayal of the expectational nature of alcohol use can be found in an episode of the TV series *Freaks & Geeks*, where the character of the younger brother and his friends substitute the keg that his older sister has acquired for her party for ‘non-alcoholic’ beer. At the party, many individuals nevertheless report feeling
‘wasted’ or drunk, not knowing that they are in fact drinking non-alcoholic beer\(^1\). There have been a number of psychological studies conducted which attempt to investigate this relationship between an individual’s expectations of, or attitudes towards alcohol use, and the same individual’s subsequent behaviour whilst ‘under the influence’ (e.g. Briddell & Wilson, 1976; Keane & Lisman, 1980). These studies would suggest that the effects of alcohol on an individual are to a significant extent based on the individual’s own expectations of how it will affect them.

In addition, it must be noted that the specific type of alcoholic beverage and the specific way it is used can carry an entirely different cultural meaning to another type of drink or act (Edwards, 1997). For example, the act of slowly drinking an expensive wine over the course of an evening is likely to carry a very different cultural meaning than the act of rapidly drinking a few bottles of cheap ‘ready-to-drink’ beverages at home. If the expensive wine just mentioned is consumed in the evening (around dinner time) and in an expensive restaurant, as opposed to first thing in the morning in the privacy of one’s own home, the interpretation of the meaning behind the entire act is again likely to be very different.

Examples such as these emphasise the point that the meaning of alcohol use is very contextual, and as a result, is open to a range of very different interpretations and sets of meanings. The above discussion emphasises the point that the meanings that attach to alcohol use vary greatly depending on the type of alcoholic drink (Edwards, 1997), the way it is consumed (e.g. speed of consumption – Parker & Williams, 1997),

\(^1\) To some extent, this is still problematic, because ‘feeling drunk’ and ‘saying you feel drunk’ are two quite different things. In this particular example, there is certainly a possibility that individuals do not feel drunk at all and are only saying they do to ‘fit in’ or gain acceptance from peers. Nevertheless, the example is still illustrative of the power that social expectations can have on an individual’s behaviour whilst, at least in outward appearance, ‘under the influence’.
2003), the time and space in which it is consumed (Chatterton & Hollands, 2002), who is consuming it, and whose interpretation of the act is sought in the first instance. Such considerations lay the foundation for my study of alcohol use. Only through investigation of the social and cultural nature of alcohol use can we hope to gain an understanding of why people use it in the ways that they do.

Public Health Research and Alcohol

Having addressed some of the cultural and social purposes alcohol can serve, I now turn to examine some of the more detrimental impacts alcohol use can have on individuals and society. As well as having a genuine curiosity about the use of alcohol, my initial decision to investigate an alcohol-related topic for my thesis was also spurred by these health-related concerns. Having seen the ways in which my peers (people under 25) used alcohol throughout my time at university, I could not help but feel that they were doing themselves (and at times, others as well) a significant degree of physiological and psychological harm through the heavy use of alcohol. I hoped then that my thesis would provide an avenue for me to investigate some of the less discussed and less visible causes of people’s alcohol use (e.g. work and organisational life), and ultimately, identify areas that might be relevant for more large scale attempts to reduce the heavy use of alcohol.

The heavy consumption of alcohol has been of concern for public health researchers for a number of decades (Edwards, 1997; Room, 1997). The fundamental drive of such research is that heavy consumption of alcohol is detrimental to an individual’s well-being, both physically and mentally - an assertion that is overwhelmingly
supported by medical research. Heavy use of alcohol has been found to cause a number of physical diseases and ailments such as; cirrhosis (liver disease) (Hemmingsson et al., 1997), cardiovascular disease (Klatsky, 1995), cancer (Bann et al., 2007; Connor et al., 2005), and systemic hypertension (Klatsky, 1996). While there are researchers who have documented some positive physical effects of moderate-to-light alcohol use (e.g. Di Castelnuovo et al., 2006; Rimm et al., 1999), it is very difficult to dispute the overwhelming epidemiological and medical evidence that, at the very least, heavy use of alcohol is detrimental to a person’s health (New Zealand Law Commission, 2009).

As well as causing direct medical problems, the intoxicating effects of alcohol can also cause individuals to injure themselves and others. According to ALAC\(^2\) (n.d.), ‘it has been estimated that 22 percent of all injuries treated in [New Zealand] hospital[s]...are linked to alcohol’, with over 50% of all alcohol-related deaths in New Zealand being the result of injury (Connor et al., 2005).

The act of driving whilst under the influence of alcohol is another key area of concern in terms of public health. The Ministry of Transport (2010) of New Zealand reported that, based on New Zealand statistics for the year ended 31 December 2009: \(\ldots\)at 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood, which is the current New Zealand adult legal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit, a driver is about sixteen times as

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\(^2\) In New Zealand, the Alcohol Advisory Council (ALAC) is a key governmental alcohol research institution. ALAC was ‘...established in 1976 by Act of Parliament, following a report by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Sale of Liquor. The Commission recommended establishing a permanent council whose aim was to encourage responsible use and minimise misuse’ (ALAC, n.d. 3)
likely to be involved in a fatal crash as the same driver with a zero blood alcohol level.

In addition, the Ministry of Transport (2010) asserts that ‘as crash severity increases, so does the contribution of alcohol / drugs’ (p. 2), which is supported by their finding that between 2007 and 2009 in New Zealand, alcohol was a ‘contributing factor’ in approximately 12.5% of minor crashes, 21% of serious crashes, and 32.5% of all fatal crashes.

Addiction to alcohol is another concern from the standpoint of public health. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (n.d.) describes ‘alcoholism’ as a ‘disease’ with ‘four symptoms’:

- **Craving** - A strong need, or urge, to drink.
- **Loss of control** - Not being able to stop drinking once drinking has begun.
- **Physical dependence** - Withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety after stopping drinking.
- **Tolerance** - The need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to get "high."

For its ‘Are You An Alcoholic?’ online test, Alcoholics Anonymous New Zealand (n.d.) uses a survey that is fundamentally very similar to the above framework, as does ALAC (n.d. 2) for its ‘Is Your Drinking OK?’ online test. As a result of addiction to alcohol or ‘alcoholism’, the frequency and intensity of the occurrence of various alcohol-related harms is exacerbated and leads to a greater number of injuries, health issues, and criminal offences (New Zealand Law Commission, 2009).
Alcohol use can also inhibit the successful functioning of societies and the development of social relationships. It has been estimated that the ‘social costs’ of harmful drug use in New Zealand in the 2005 / 06 year were around $6.5 billion. Of this $6.5 billion, $4.5 billion was estimated to be the result of harmful alcohol use (Business and Economic Research Limited, 2009). In terms of social relationships, the 2008 / 2009 New Zealand Drug & Alcohol Use Survey found that past year alcohol use had harmful effects on 7% of all participants’ friendships or social lives, and caused 6% of all participants to take days off work or school (Ministry of Health, 2009).

Indeed the adverse impact of alcohol use on work and productivity has been well explored by Trice & Roman (1978), who assert that absenteeism and ineffectiveness can have significant economic costs for organisations, as well as detrimental effects on workers’ well-being, through breakdown of relationships and termination of employment. Commenting on the findings of the Ministry of Health (2009), the New Zealand Law Commission (2009) states that ‘there is also a significant problem with alcohol-related absenteeism. An estimated 147,500 adults (5.6% of the population [of New Zealand]) reported having at least one day off work or school in the last 12 months as a result of their alcohol use’ (p. 91).

Finally, from a criminal perspective, it was reported that ‘31 percent of [New Zealand Police] recorded offences [in New Zealand in 2007/08] were committed in circumstances where the offender had consumed alcohol prior to committing the offence’ (New Zealand Police, 2009, p. 7). Building on this statistic, the Ministry of
Social Development (2009) found in their study of domestic homicides that ‘alcohol and/or drug abuse featured at the time of the incidents in about two-thirds of [couple-related homicides between 2002 and 2006 in New Zealand], sometimes involving both perpetrator and victim’ (p. 8). In addition, the Ministry of Social Development (2009) suggests that drug and alcohol use and abuse was among ‘the three most common factors associated with child homicide events’ in their study (p. 9).

While it must be remembered that correlation is not necessarily causation, it is hard to ignore the weight of these findings, which prompt us to understand just how significantly the heavy use of alcohol can adversely impact societies and the individuals who comprise them. What must be remembered here is that it is not the mere fact of consumption that is found to be problematic in most of the above studies (though even small quantities may be risky for susceptible individuals – Rimm et al., 1999), but the frequent consumption of large quantities.

In recent times, heavy use through ‘binge drinking’ activities has been a central focus for alcohol researchers in the public health arena. The ALAC (2011) 2009 – 2010 Drinking Behaviours Report classified 21% of all New Zealand adult drinkers over 18 years old as ‘binge drinkers’. For the purpose of that particular study, ‘binge drinking’ was defined as consuming ‘the equivalent of seven or more standard drinks on the last occasion they drank alcohol [as at the time of survey]’ (p. 7). ALAC (2011) surveys prior to this used a slightly different definition, with a ‘binge drinker’ being an individual who consumed ‘the equivalent of seven or more standard drinks on the last occasion they drank alcohol or did so on any occasion in the last two weeks [as at the time of survey]’ (p. 7).
The ALAC definition of ‘binge drinking’ is but one in a range of different interpretations of the concept in the public health field. The fact of variation on behalf of ALAC itself illustrates the degree of ambiguity surrounding the ‘binge drinking’ term. Some other definitions of ‘binge drinking’ which I came across in the course of my reading can be found below;

- ‘…men consuming at least eight, and women at least six standard units of alcohol in a single day, that is, double the maximum recommended ‘safe limit’ for men and women respectively’ (Institute of Alcohol Studies, n.d.)
- ‘the consumption of 5 or more alcoholic beverages on one or more occasions’ (Naimi et al., 2003, p. 70)
- ‘an intermittent yet prolonged episode of alcohol abuse’ (DeJong, 2003, p. 1635)
- ‘the consumption of a large amount of alcohol on a single occasion’ (Wechsler et al., 1995, p. 982).

As a result of such ambiguity, as well as other issues (discussed below), two of the United Kingdom’s leading alcohol researchers, Measham & Brain (2005), have contended that ‘binge drinking’ is an inappropriate conceptual foundation for analysing people’s current drinking behaviours, especially those of young people. They posit that ‘binge drinking’ is a politically and socially constructed discourse, which is maintained and strengthened by media and other social institutions in order to further the agendas of these institutions. This criticism of ‘binge drinking’ has found support from several other public health researchers (Hayward & Hobbs, 2007; Parker & Williams, 2003; Szmigin et al., 2008). According to this group of authors, some of the conceptual problems with the ‘binge drinking’ discourse are;
a) it is inherently ambiguous and as a result becomes redundant as a descriptive concept (Hayward & Hobbs, 2007; Szmigin et al, 2008). See above for the various ways in which ‘binge drinking’ has been interpreted by different public health researchers;

b) it establishes heavy alcohol use as a ‘problem’ that afflicts only the ‘abnormal’ or ‘flawed’ in an otherwise ‘responsible’ or ‘normal’ society (Brain, 2000). In reality, it is often the most ‘ordinary’, law-abiding citizens who are engaging in the ‘binge drinking’ behaviour described by mainstream public health research (Parker & Williams, 2003);

c) it stunts consideration of the deeper phenomena that underpin heavy alcohol use amongst young people. That is, through an exclusive problematic (‘binge’) / non-problematic (non-binge) dichotomy, it fails to highlight the deeper sociological and psychological reasons for heavy alcohol use amongst youths (Brain, 2000; Measham, 2004; Parker & Williams, 2003), which, as mentioned in the ‘Alcohol’ section of this literature review, are critical to gaining a full understanding of people’s alcohol use.

What then is the alternative to the ‘binge drinking’ framework? Drawing from theories of consumerism, such as Bauman’s (1998) conception of the ‘flawed consumer’, Brain (2000) suggests that more accurate conceptual descriptors of the current ‘postmodern alcohol order’, particularly amongst young people, are the concepts of ‘psychoactive consumption’ (‘selecting products that…provide [young drinkers] with a good hit at a reasonable price’, p. 8) and ‘symbolic consumption’ (‘selecting products that convey the appropriate image and lifestyle’, p. 8). Brain
argues that these two forms of consumption are part of a broader effort of ‘calculated’ or ‘rational hedonism’ amongst young people:

...bounded hedonistic consumption is the ideal form of behaviour in consumer societies. It represents the essence of post-modern consumer drinking. Here a sophisticated consumer engages in a search for hedonistic experiences, in this case by pharmacologically altering their mood and engaging in symbolic display through the process of consumption, but always in planned and structured ways. Drinking occurs at specific times and in specific places. The consumer drinker is able to separate one life-world from another and carefully control his or her behaviour in each of these life-worlds. In the leisure sphere this behaviour is increasingly organized around the pleasures of instant gratification (p. 9).

This movement to ‘re-frame’ youth drinking behaviour has been supported by authors such as Szmigin et al. (2008) and Measham (2006). A key aspect of this new form drinking behaviour that distinguishes it from that of previous generations’, is the deliberateness with which intoxication is pursued. Drunkenness is not seen as a coincidental side-effect by many young people, but is actively sought through detailed planning of drinking occasions and coordination amongst peers (Parker & Williams, 2003). Measham & Brain (2005) found that young people use a variety of strategies to achieve a ‘controlled loss of control’, such as ‘pre-loading’ or ‘smashing back’ (A. McArdle, personal communication, October 4, 2010) – the act of drinking at home, often at a rapid pace, before going out to nightclubs in order to save money on alcohol use (clubs, pubs and bars generally apply a hefty mark-up to the alcohol they sell in comparison to bottle stores or supermarkets). As Measham (2004) outlines, ‘this hedonism is a calculated hedonism, however, most usually within the boundaries of time (the weekend), space (club, bar, private party), company (supportive friends) and intensity’ (p. 319).
It is important to remember however that young people’s behaviour does not exist in isolation from a broader social and economic environment, with changes in these arenas subsequently affecting behavioural and attitudinal changes in young people in significant ways. One such structural change that is explored by Brain (2000) concerns the brewing industry’s attempts to compete with the expansion of amphetamine drug use in the 1990s. He posits that the brewing industry became aware of a significant demand for psychoactive substances such as ecstasy and speed, and, faced with a need to address a severe decline in alcohol sales, developed cheaper, stronger (in terms of alcohol content) beverages that were specifically targeted, particularly through their taste and design, at the younger ‘psychoactive’ market (Balding, 1996; Brain & Parker, 1997). In addition, these ‘designer drinks’ are promoted through expensive marketing campaigns (Measham, 2006), which are intended to ‘hook’ young consumers through association of the beverage with a number of ‘glamorous’ discourses, such as sexual conquest and social acceptance.

Alongside the recommodification and marketing of actual beverages, Measham (2004) and Chatterton & Hollands (2002) also suggest the redesign of the contemporary bar scene as an important part of ‘calculated hedonistic’ drinking practices;

The point here is that the expansion of alcohol-based leisure and increased sessional consumption have been facilitated by commercial developments in the beverage alcohol industry, with a revolution in...licensed leisure venues which made them more appealing than they had been for a decade, not only to traditional (working-class male) pub drinkers but also to ‘new’ groups of consumers or niche markets in the increasingly segmented leisure sector (p. 318).
Chatterton & Hollands (2002) go on to suggest that such ‘urban playscapes’ are a key means by which young people form and re-form their sense of identity. They explore the development of new urban spaces, and the way in which certain types of drinking spaces serve to create / reinforce particular forms of identity, such as a ‘mainstream’ or ‘alternative’ identity. Parker & Williams (2003) reached a similar conclusion regarding the relationship between alcohol and identity. They found that alcohol and a ‘big night out’ served the functional purpose of maintaining a ‘work hard-play hard’ image amongst young adults in the UK. Here the drinking act was seen as a stress reliever, but also as a way of maintaining a particular image / identity. Studies such as these encourage the point that drinking, and all its associated experiences, such as the spaces in which drinking occurs and the types of drinks that are consumed, are symbolic acts that affirm or deny one’s belongingness to a particular group.

To conclude this section of the literature review, it is worth reflecting on how the concepts of calculated or rational hedonism, psychoactive consumption, and symbolic consumption differ from the mainstream public health discourse of ‘binge drinking’. Rather than focussing solely on quantitative measures (though this paradigm is clearly useful for certain purposes), these alternative concepts encourage deeper consideration of the way in which social attitudes toward drinking have changed, especially amongst young people.

Drunkenness amongst many young people is not seen as something to repress, avoid, to be ashamed of. Instead, it is encouraged by many youth sub-cultures and is
determinedly and deliberately sought after, largely through the use of ready-to-drink alcoholic beverages and spirits (as opposed to beer or wine). In addition, drinking is a highly symbolic act for many young people and plays a vital role in processes of socialisation. For researchers then, it is important that the dominant discourse of ‘binge drinking’ does not stand in the way of deeper analyses of the way people are using alcohol, and how the reasons for its use have changed in recent times. It is to this end that my own study is geared, in that I hope to provide an account of how people’s work lives might be understood as a reason for their use / non-use of alcohol.

**Work and Alcohol**

As can be seen from the above review of public health literature, the heavy use of alcohol, particularly the ‘calculated hedonism’ and ‘determined drunkenness’ that is supposedly characteristic of young people today, poses significant risks to individuals’ health. Interestingly however, while there has been a large amount of alcohol research conducted by those in public health roles on the use of alcohol and its effects, studies that examine the relationship between work, as a social institution, and alcohol use are relatively few in number (Trice & Sonnenstuhl, 1988).

Indeed, it is interesting to note that I personally reviewed 10 years worth of ALAC’s self-published magazines (2000 – 2010) and found no mention of a work-alcohol link at any point in over 25 magazines. This would seem to suggest that the work-alcohol link lacks prominence in the formal New Zealand public health agenda. I find this absence surprising given that nearly the entire population of developed
countries spend most of their adult lives at work. Is it not conceivable then that work life, and all its associated experiences, could have an impact on the way in which an individual uses alcohol? This absence of a work-alcohol link on the public health agenda was observed by Trice (1965) over 40 years ago, and it is encouraging to see that the number of published work-alcohol studies, at least those in academia, has grown significantly since then.

In their extensive review of the work-alcohol literature, Trice & Sonnenstuhl (1988) propose that work-alcohol studies can be broadly segmented into four main groups. These four approaches or ‘perspectives’ are; the social control perspective, the work culture perspective, the work stress perspective, and the work alienation perspective. It is my view that the typology proposed by Trice & Sonnenstuhl is exceptionally useful for gaining a general understanding of the work-alcohol field, and as a result, each of these four perspectives will be reviewed here. During the literature review phase of my own research, I developed a very similar understanding of the work-alcohol field prior to reading the Trice & Sonnenstuhl paper. I see this as an attestation to the accuracy of their typology.

**Work and Alcohol: The Social Control Perspective**

Trice & Roman (1978) argue that there are two work-based ‘risk factors’ that may promote a greater degree of alcohol use amongst workers; absence of supervision and low visibility of job performance (Ames & Janes, 1987). Thus, individuals will have more opportunities to drink heavily in jobs where;
- there is little or no supervision (Ames & Janes, 1987; Manello & Seaman, 1979);
- there is little or no interdependence with other work roles (Roman, 1981);
- there is low visibility of job performance (Ames & Janes, 1987);
- work is highly transitive (i.e. where workers travel between locations frequently or obtain new management / supervision often) (Trice & Sonnenstuhl, 1988).

Given such considerations, there have been a number of authors who have conducted studies into the role of social control - both formal (i.e. supervisors, management, organisational policies on drinking), and informal (i.e. normative regulation through sub-cultural values and beliefs)\(^3\) in workers’ use of alcohol.

One study of formal control was conducted by Bamberger & Bacharach (2006), who examined the relationship between supervisors’ abuse of subordinates and ‘problem drinking’. They found that supervisory abuse of subordinates affected heavier-than-average drinking by subordinates, but this was moderated by the subordinate’s degree of ‘conscientiousness’ and ‘agreeableness’. Interestingly however, the authors found no support for a stress based explanation of this behaviour (i.e. that employees drank to alleviate stress caused by abuse). Instead, it would seem that employees who were abused used alcohol as a means of *resistance* against such abuse (e.g. some employees would purposely turn up to work intoxicated in order to irritate their

\(^3\) Ames & Janes (1992) actually see the ‘social control’ perspective described by Trice & Sonnenstuhl (1988) as a subset of a broader ‘cultural’ perspective on work-alcohol. I agree with Ames & Janes (1992) insofar as they are referring to informal social control. The aspect of informal social control is thus dealt with in the ‘Cultural Perspective’ section of this sub-review.
abusive supervisors). It should be noted however that resistance can also be construed as a means of alleviating / reducing stress, so there are some conceptual difficulties with the conclusions of Bamberger & Bacharach (2006).

Another study based in the ‘social control’ perspective was conducted by Roman (1981), who found that while interdependence of tasks and on-the-job mobility were positively correlated with alcohol problems amongst workers, closeness of supervision was not. This would appear to go against the assertions of Trice & Sonnenstuhl (1988) and Ames & Janes (1987) regarding supervision.

In addition, the physical availability of alcohol at work is a factor that has been found to influence worker drinking activities. In a military setting for example, Ames et al. (2007) found that the low on-base alcohol prices, frequent barrack parties, and drink promotions at bars in close proximity to a naval home base were all factors in heavy alcohol use amongst young adults in the US Navy. A similar conclusion regarding the physical availability of alcohol was reached by Ames, Grube & Moore (2000). An extreme illustration of this ‘physical availability’ theory is illustrated by Parker’ & Harford’s (1992) study of alcohol consumption in different occupations. They found that bartenders were amongst the highest average daily consumers of alcohol across the entire range of occupations for which data was collected, both ‘blue’ and ‘white collar’. In a more indirect sense, this availability theory might also be evident in situations where alcohol is more available to those

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4 The ‘social availability’ of alcohol is another area of interest for the work-alcohol discussion, but is dealt with in the ‘Cultural Perspective’ of this review.
individuals who earn higher-than-average incomes, or more accurately, those who have a lot of disposable income to spend on alcohol (Parker & Harford, 1992).

**Work and Alcohol: The Cultural Perspective**

While the Trice & Sonnenstuhl (1988) review is very useful in its categorical capacity, many of the studies grouped under the ‘cultural perspective’ are now over 30 years old\(^5\). As a result, this section of my review serves to provide an update on the work culture-alcohol sub-field. The basic assumption underlying the cultural perspective on work-alcohol is that informal social or normative controls in the workplace, achieved through shared values, beliefs and practices, have the potential to inhibit and / or encourage a person’s alcohol use (Trice & Roman, 1978).

One of the most widely cited culture-alcohol papers was authored by Janes & Ames (1989), which documents their study of ‘male blue collar’ factory workers in the US. This study found that those individuals whose social networks were comprised largely of work relationships were the most likely to drink heavily and experience problems with alcohol. Thus, ‘membership in this subculture…was most important for those men who had no interests or social involvements outside the workplace’ (Janes & Ames, 1989, p. 245).

This is consistent with the findings of Martin, Roman, & Blum (1996), who found that participation in work-based drinking networks was positively related to problem

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\(^5\) This is to be expected given the time at which the paper was written.
drinking. The impact of work-based drinking sub-cultures on problems arising from alcohol use has also been discussed by Bennett & Lehman (1999), who found that ‘group occupational structure may be an important factor in determining whether employee substance use will lead to problems for others’ (p. 317). The authors here express strong support for a cultural perspective on work-alcohol, suggesting that those organisational reactions to heavy alcohol use which treat the problem as one of ‘individual control’ risk neglecting the underlying organisational norms which might encourage drinking. A reaction only to the ‘problematic individual’ means that such norms continue to exist and propagate heavy alcohol use amongst organisational members (Schaef & Fassel, 1988). A similar sentiment is expressed by Cooper et al. (1990), who found no link between work stress and heavy alcohol use, but emphasised the importance of social and group behaviour at work to understanding alcohol use.

Another site where many ‘cultural’ studies of work-alcohol have been undertaken are military work settings. Ames et al. (2009) conducted a large amount of work on military workplaces and the cultural role of drinking. Utilising a social learning theory perspective and mixed-methods for gaining data, they found that ‘alcohol was deeply embedded in Navy culture’ (p. 147). In particular, they found that alcohol was collectively valued as a means of relaxing after a deployment aboard a ship. Moreover, senior officers often drank heavily themselves, thereby serving to normalise this behaviour for younger sailors. The study of military workplaces as sites of drinking activity is not new – Trice & Sonnenstuhl (1989) cite studies that have examined the use of alcohol amongst military personnel and the ways in which
this alcohol use are associated with the formation of organisational relationships (e.g. Bryant, 1974).

While not necessarily a ‘work’ setting, some of the most conceptually useful culture-alcohol research can be found in studies of college fraternities in the USA. In Workman’s (2001) case study of a particular fraternity, he found that alcohol use served a functional cultural purpose for the individuals, even though many individuals were consuming very dangerous quantities of alcohol. Within the fraternal sub-culture, heavy drinking and drunkenness provided both a sense of accomplishment and a form of entertainment for students, but members of the fraternity were also aware of the possible ‘downside’ of heavy drinking (e.g. unwanted sexual encounters). Nevertheless, Workman found that the ‘functional’ role of drinking was the one that continued to be reproduced by members, particularly through shared stories.

Again, whilst not set in a ‘workplace’ per se, Campbell (2000) has investigated after-work drinking cultures in a rural New Zealand pub. As with all the above studies, he too found that alcohol served a functional purpose within the masculine sub-culture of the pub. In particular, drinking provided a means of demonstrating ‘public masculinity’ to other drinkers, with the ability to ‘hold your piss’ (i.e. drink large quantities but appear to be unaffected by the alcohol consumed) being a central characteristic of this particular form of masculinity. In addition, the drinking act served as a foundation for the performance of other cultural acts, such as ‘conversational cockfighting’ – ‘discussions of local events, people, work, politics
and sport’ (p. 572) but with a competitive and at times abusive tone that served to test whether men could ‘handle it’.

In all the above studies then, drinking and drunkenness (or lack of drunkenness in Campbell’s (2000) case) can be seen as serving both symbolic and functional roles in these organisational sub-cultures. It is within this broad perspective on the work-alcohol relationship that my own research is situated. Using a very closely related concept (organisational identity, discussed later) that has been well developed over the last two decades, I hope to be able to generate some new insights about the organisational ‘culture’ and alcohol relationship.

**Work and Alcohol: The Work Stress and Work Alienation Perspectives**

Drawing on concepts from social psychology, studies grounded in a stress and alienation perspective tend to be very much based on quantitative survey methods and intricate data analysis using mathematical equations. An excellent review of this area of the work-alcohol literature is provided by Frone (1999). At the heart of the work stress perspective is the view that ‘alcohol use may be a direct or indirect response to the physical and psychosocial qualities of the work environment’ (p. 284).

As Frone (1999) goes on to outline, the work stress-alcohol link has been approached in numerous ways by different authors. The first approach is through a ‘simple cause and effect’ analysis. Such studies ‘simply attempt to document an overall relation between various work stressors and different dimensions of alcohol
use’ (Frone, 1999, p. 286). Researchers adopting this approach have found ‘stressors’ such as low job complexity, low job control, dangerous work conditions, heavy workloads, and job insecurity to all be positively related to heavy alcohol use (Parker & Farmer, 1990; Ragland et al., 1995).

This ‘cause and effect’ model of stress-alcohol has been criticised on the basis that it is too conceptually simple and fails to fully account for the work stress-alcohol relationship (Frone, 1999). The simplicity of this approach results in negligence of other intervening variables that may play an important role in understanding the work stress-alcohol relationship (Frone, 1999). For example, low job control may not directly cause an individual to use alcohol. A more appropriate explanation might be that low job control causes an individual to be stressed, and where an individual sees alcohol as an effective means of relieving stress, they use alcohol more heavily than they otherwise would to relieve the stress caused by low job control. In addition, there are numerous questionable assumptions made by researchers adopting the simplistic ‘cause and effect’ approach, namely that certain aspects of work do indeed induce stress in workers, and the assumption that all people see alcohol as an effective means of reducing this stress (Cooper, Russell, & Frone, 1990).

In response to these problems, researchers have utilised ‘mediated’ and ‘moderated’ models to investigate the work stress-alcohol link (Frone, 1999). These approaches recognise that the relationship between stress and alcohol use is a complex one that involves the interplay of numerous ‘mediating’ and ‘moderating’ variables. For
example, rather than assume that work stress directly causes alcohol use, a more ‘mediated’ description might be that high work demands and poor interpersonal relationships with co-workers are positively related to anxiety, with anxiety being positively related to average weekly alcohol consumption (these were the findings of Vasse et al., 1998). As a result, these ‘mediated’ and ‘moderated’ models of work stress tend to be more complex, often involving many variables to depict the work stress-alcohol relationship.

In a similar vein to the ‘work stress perspective’, the ‘work alienation perspective’ is another approach that researchers have utilised for investigating the work-alcohol relationship. The premise here is that work that is ‘alienating’ will cause workers to drink heavily and experience problems with alcohol. Drawing on the work of Karl Marx, researchers working from this paradigm aim to investigate the relationship between one’s alcohol use on the one hand, and their ‘engagement in the production process in such a way that one is unable to work in such a way that control over one’s own labor and the use of one’s human capacities are possible’ (Greenberg & Grunberg, 1995, p. 84) on the other. Greenberg & Grunberg (1995) suggest that alienation has two key components – a lack of control over one’s workplace, and situations where ‘one’s skills or capacity are not called upon to any substantial degree’ (p. 84).

The critique of the alienation perspective however is that it is somewhat essentialistic, assuming that all individuals have a need or desire for ‘rewarding’ work (Frone et al., 1997, Frone, 1999). There is also the ever-present difficulty of determining what constitutes ‘rewarding work’ and measuring job satisfaction. Nevertheless, given the
similarity of work stress and work alienation approaches, Frone (1999) argues that both perspectives can be treated as conceptually alike, and thus subsumes the alienation perspective under the work stress paradigm.

It seems to me however that much of the studies that utilise the alienation concept do so in a very different and less structural way than the work of Marx would suggest, as evidenced by Greenberg & Grunberg’s (1995) reduction of alienation to merely two components. As a result of this, Marx’s structural concepts such as the relations of power and modes of production receive little or no attention in examining the work-alcohol relationship from an alienation perspective. Thus, while alienation studies may be very similar to those studies adopting a work stress approach as Frone (1999) asserts, the extent to which they can be seen as having Marxist roots and / or drawing substantially on the original theory of Marx is in my view, quite limited.

Greenberg & Grunberg (1995) have authored one of the most widely cited alienation-alcohol studies, and found that low job autonomy, low use of capacities, and lack of participation in decision-making in the workplace were associated with heavy drinking and negative consequences from drinking. However, they found this alienation-alcohol relationship was mediated by negative affect and the degree to which workers saw alcohol as an effective means of coping with such unhappiness. That is, only where alienating factors caused negative affect and where workers saw alcohol as a useful means of dealing with such negative affect were they likely to drink heavily.
Another alienation study was conducted by Seeman, Seeman & Budros (1988). The key finding of this study was that powerlessness at work, as a form of alienation, was related directly to alcohol use and problems with alcohol. What this suggests is that one’s control over their work is an important factor in theorising the relationship between work and alcohol use. Interestingly, the authors found no significant relationship between alcohol use and social isolation (i.e. ‘the lack of a sense of interpersonal community’ (Seeman, Seeman & Budros, 1988, p. 185)) or between alcohol use and self-estrangement (i.e. being engaged in work that was not intrinsically rewarding).

In summary, it would seem that the work stress and alienation literature is yet to reach any firm conclusions regarding the nature of the work stress / alienation-alcohol relationship. This seems to be in large part due to the precarious nature of defining concepts such as ‘stress’, ‘job dissatisfaction’, and the complicated epistemological nature of the psychological relationships under investigation (Martin, Roman, & Blum, 1996). However, what is clear from the various findings discussed above is that stress and alienation at work are important factors in understanding why individuals use alcohol in particular ways. As a result, it is important for any researcher conducting a work-alcohol study to be mindful of these considerations when conducting their own investigations.
Having discussed the alcohol literature in some depth, I now turn to consider how I intend to make my own contribution to the work-alcohol field. As outlined above, existing work-alcohol studies can be broadly grouped into four main categories. However, an approach I believe would be of considerable value to the field, which has not yet been adopted by work-alcohol researchers, is one that examines alcohol use through the lens of organisational identity.

Organisational identity has been a conceptual focus for researchers since Albert & Whetten’s (1985) landmark article on the topic, which brought the concept to the foreground of organisational studies. In the article, Albert & Whetten proposed that, like individual persons, organisations as groups of individuals can also have their own sense of identity or ‘self’. They argued that ‘organisational identity’, at a basic level, are those features that are ‘central, enduring, and distinctive’ to a particular organisation. Hatch & Schultz (2002) usefully describe Albert & Whetten’s (1985) conception of organisational identity as follows; ‘the phenomenon of organizational identity appears whenever members of the organization ask themselves “Who are we?,” “what business are we in?,” or “what do we want to be?”’ (p. 3).

Since the Albert & Whetten article, organisational identity has garnered a considerable amount of attention from organisational theorists and has been applied in a number of ways to gain a deeper understanding of organisations. Pratt & Rafaeli (1997), for example, have analysed the issue of dress amongst nurses in a hospital,
and the ways in which the debate over dress amongst the hospital nurses served to draw out varied interpretations of their identity. In particular, the authors found that ‘informants used particular forms of dress (e.g., street clothes or scrubs) to represent a variety of issues related to their social identities’ (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997, p. 874). For example, wearing of ‘scrubs’ was seen by some nurses as symbolic of their role as intensive carers, acute care providers, and autonomous individuals. On the other hand, wearing of ‘street clothes’ was seen by other nurses as symbolic of their identity as rehabilitators, patient-centred individuals, and nursing managers. The two key insights to be gained from the Pratt & Rafaeli study are 1) organisational identity is often multilayered and fragmented, not having a single clear set of characteristics across all organisational members and 2) organisational identity is represented, intentionally or unintentionally, in many different artefacts of an organisation (in this case, the dress of the nurses).

In another study drawing on the concept of organisational identity, Alvesson & Willmott (2002) analysed the ways in which organisational identity acts as a mechanism of normative control that governs employee behaviour and thus eliminates the need for direct management monitoring. Importantly, they develop the concept of ‘identity work’, ‘an interpretive activity involved in reproducing and transforming self-identity’ (p. 627). What this suggests is that ‘organisational identity’ is perhaps better understood as an ‘activity’ or process. In addition, Alvesson & Willmott (2002) assert that these identification processes must be considered in conjunction with the deeper power relationships and political agendas within organisations.
A final example of the empirical application of the organisational identity concept can be found in the work of Dutton & Dukerich (1991), who examined how the New York Port Authority’s dealings with the homeless posed challenges to organisational members’ existing conceptions of the organisation’s identity and image. Kenny, Whittle & Willmott (2012) effectively draw out the implications of the Dutton & Dukerich (1991) study for theory as follows:

This example of the Port Authority illustrates how a work culture (set of shared norms, values and beliefs) fostered a particular sense of organizational identity, as a responsive public service organization. Employees were so identified with this collective sense of identity that they pressed their employer to change its policy by building drop-in centres, thereby acting as a kind of advocate for the homeless. In this regard, work culture is understood as a ‘symbolic context within which interpretations of organizational identity are formed and intentions to influence organizational image are formulated’ (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, p. 360) (p. 131).

Following on from Dutton & Dukerich’s connection between organisational culture and organisational identity, Gioia, Schultz & Corley (2004) suggest that as a result of interaction between organisational identity and ‘organizational image’ (the way that organisational members perceive that ‘outsiders’ view the organisation), organisations necessarily exist in a state of ‘adaptive instability’:

The basic concept of adaptive instability in organizational identity is a straightforward one: as a consequence of its interrelationships with image in its various guises, organizational identity becomes dynamic and mutable. This instability in identity actually confers a benefit to the organization, because it allows better adaptation to the demands of an environment that is itself undergoing continuous change (p. 365).

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6 This concept has much in common with Hatch & Schultz’s (2002) notion of ‘hyper-adaption’.
In line with this view of organisational identity as existing in a state of flux or instability, authors such as Ashforth & Mael (1989) have argued that it is possible for an organisation, like an individual, to possess multiple identities, which are employed as and when each is needed (note the similarity here to the findings of the Pratt & Rafaeli (1997) dress study and Alvesson & Willmott’s (2002) ‘identity work’ concept discussed earlier):

...as discussed below, the organizationally situated social identity may, in fact, be comprised of more or less disparate and loosely coupled identities. This parallels work in various social domains which indicates that individuals often retain multiple identities (pp. 22-23).

Insights such as these are important for those working in the organisational identity field, as they encourage theorists to consider the possibility that identity is a phenomenon that is enacted through social processes, which, given their continuous and unpredictable nature, bestow organisational identity with a degree of dynamism and spontaneity (Mead, 1934).

In terms of the work-alcohol relationship then, the fundamental question that an ‘organisational identity perspective’ gives rise to, and one that I believe has not been addressed in the work-alcohol literature, is how processes of organisational identification (i.e. people and ‘the organisation’ coming to form / re-form a sense of collective identity) are related to alcohol use amongst organisational members. I see the organisational identity framework proposed by Hatch & Schultz (2004) to be very well suited to addressing this question. Their framework of organisational identity is shown in diagrammatic form below:
The first reason why I see this framework as well suited to investigations of the organisational identity-alcohol relationship is due to its integrative nature. That is, the framework highlights the relationships between organisational culture, identity and image, and thus avoids the somewhat troublesome view of ‘organisational identity’ as a solitary, vacuous concept that exists independent of any other phenomena. The framework also provides a forum for examining the four processes that link culture, identity and image together. In this way, the framework assists in promoting a more holistic and dynamic view of organisational identity through inclusion of the three key elements of the identification process and their respective relational processes.

These three aspects of organisational life; culture, identity, and image, are phenomena that the alcohol literature would suggest are particularly salient to understanding the work-alcohol relationship, but which have not been addressed in an integrative manner. As outlined previously, drinking is not only seen by...
individuals / groups as a way of gaining a sense of ‘self’ (identity), it can also come to act as a functional, social activity for particular groups (culture) and as a way of impressing upon those outside a particular social group (image). The Hatch & Schultz framework provides a means of investigating the role of alcohol in all of these social processes.

The second reason why I see this framework as particularly useful for my purposes, is because Hatch & Schultz have integrated the important ‘I’ and ‘me’ concepts from the work of George Herbert Mead (1934) into their theory. The authors indicated in their work that one of the key motives behind their framework was to find ‘organisational analogs’ for these two cornerstones of Mead’s theory of the ‘self’. Mead (1934) has been widely recognised as a key contributor to knowledge of social identity. His key contributions to the field are briefly outlined below:

- Identity or one’s sense of self is better understood as a process of identification. It is bound up in social relationships and is socially constructed through interactions with other members. It is inaccurate to view identity as some essential, fixed, or internal phenomenon.

- The ‘self’ (i.e. identity) is comprised of two key components, the first being the ‘me’, which Mead describes as a ‘generalised other’; an individual’s perception of the attitudes a ‘general’ or stereotypical ‘other’ holds towards him or her. Such perceptions of the ‘other’ allow the individual to gain a sense of ‘who they are’, and also who they are not. The ‘me’, as one component of identity, thus comes to govern an individual’s attitudes, thoughts and behaviour.
According to Mead, the second component of the self is the ‘I’ – the improvisatory aspect of human behaviour that one can never predict, and can only recognise once a particular act has been completed. The ‘I’ is the aspect of human behaviour that reacts to the ‘generalised other’ or ‘me’ (Kosmala & Xian, 2011). In real-time however, the spontaneous acts of the ‘I’ immediately become part of the ‘me’. Hatch & Schultz (2002) describe the ‘me’ / ‘I’ relationship as follows; ‘the “me” is the self a person is aware of, whereas the “I” is something that is not given in the “me”’ (p. 993).

I was initially going to use Mead’s social identity theory as the theoretical base for my empirical work, as I found his ideas striking when considered in relation to drinking practices and the alcohol literature which I had read up to that point. I found a useful application of Mead’s theory in the work of Lyng (1990), which at one point was going to serve as the model for my own investigations. Lyng utilised the ‘I’ and ‘me’ concepts to formulate a theory of voluntary risk-taking. He suggests, and supports using data gathered from an empirical study of skydivers, that voluntary risk-taking for these individuals provided a means of balancing their sense of self, by allowing the improvisatory ‘I’ to flourish in an identity that was otherwise tightly controlled by the ‘generalised other’ (i.e. the ‘me’ dominated the sense of self, voluntary risk taking provided a space for the ‘I’ to flourish and re-balance the individual’s identity). Having read both the work of Lyng and Mead, I wondered what the work-alcohol implications of a study with a similar theoretical foundation might be. I was later fortunate to come across Hatch & Schultz’s framework, which

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7 A term that could perhaps be used to describe the ‘calculated hedonistic’ drinking practices described earlier in this review.
was very similar to the work of the other two authors, but that had been specifically adapted for an organisational application.

The Hatch & Schultz framework, at a basic level, equates Mead’s individual ‘I’ with organisational culture, and the individual ‘me’ with organisational image. The rationale here is that the concept of organisational culture, as one component of overall organisational identity, represents the ‘internal definition of self’ for a collective, whilst organisational image represents the ‘external definition of self’ for a collective. The parallels between the Hatch & Schultz framework and Mead’s theory of identity then become immediately clear. The implication is that organisational identity is formed as much by internal factors (i.e. culture) as it is by the way organisational members wish to be seen and / or think they are seen by those external to the organisation (i.e. image). While a fairly basic premise of the framework, this Meadian view of organisational identity has some very interesting implications for understandings of the work-alcohol relationship. That is, the drinking activities of a particular group of workers (e.g. knowledge-intensive workers) might be just as much understood as an internal organisational ritual (Trice & Beyer, 1984) as an attempt at ‘impression management’, or crafting a certain perception in the eyes of a target group of ‘outsiders’.

Hatch & Schultz (2002) suggest that these two components of identity, culture (I) and image (me), are connected via four main processes. The first of these is the process of ‘mirroring’ organisational identity in stakeholder images (Arrow 1 of Figure 2). This aspect of the model refers to outsiders ‘reflecting’ an organisation’s image back onto the organisation itself. This aspect of the identification process
involves organisational members coming to see the ‘images’ that outsiders use to represent the organisation, and thus provides a ‘mirror’ for the organisation, through which organisational members can ascertain whether their identity has been accurately translated to outsiders. This implies that organisational images might not always be consistent with organisational members’ sense (or senses) of self (Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

As illustrated in the work of Dutton & Dukerich (1991) on the New York Port Authority’s dealings with the homeless, the ‘mirroring’ process often highlights inconsistencies between how an organisation is viewed by outsiders, and how the members of organisation view themselves as a collective. In their study for example, Dutton & Dukerich found that;

...when homeless people congregated in the Port Authority’s bus and train stations, the homeless problem became the Port Authority’s problem in the eyes of the community and the local media. Dutton and Dukerich showed how the negative images of the organization encountered in the community and portrayed in the press encouraged the Port Authority to take action to correct public opinion (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 998).

When the ‘reflections’ of identity held up by outsiders are inconsistent with an organisation’s sense of self, members of the organisation are likely to be motivated to question their collective self-definition (Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2004; Hatch & Schultz, 2002). This leads to the second identification process - ‘reflecting’ on ‘who we are’” (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 998) (Arrow 2 of Figure 2). This process involves a critical self-evaluation on behalf of organisational members to determine
whether the discrepancy between their collective sense of self, and the images of them held by outsiders, are in fact the result of inaccurate self-definition. Enter ‘organisational culture’:

...once organizational images are mirrored in identity they will be interpreted in relation to existing organizational self-definitions that are embedded in cultural understanding. When this happens, identity is reinforced or changed through the process of reflecting on identity in relation to deep cultural values and assumptions that are activated by the reflection process (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1000).

The ‘reflecting’ process is essentially organisational members re-visiting the ‘who are we?’ question which, as discussed earlier, represents the foundation of organisational identity. The ‘reflecting’ process was clearly evident in Pratt & Rafaelli’s (1997) study of organisational dress. The authors found that conflict over the type of dress to be worn by nurses prompted the nurses and other hospital staff to more deeply consider the nature of their jobs and ‘who they were’ (e.g. professionals, acute carers, rehabilitators). In this way, the reflection process can be seen as a response to external identity-related stimuli (‘mirroring’). This reflecting process can either reinforce existing identity (and thus cultural assumptions), or serve as a catalyst for a complete identity overhaul.

This leads to discussion of the third identification process, ‘expressing’ cultural understandings in identity claims (Arrow 3 of Figure 2) – the equivalent of the past actions of Mead’s ‘I’ (culture) being subsumed under the ‘me’. In the Pratt & Rafaelli (1997) example, ‘expressing’ would be the act of collectively deciding on the form of dress (an identity claim) to be worn by nurses and wearing it accordingly to express the identity that the collective wished to portray to itself. Hatch & Schultz
(2002) refer to this as ‘incorporating organizational reflections in [an organization’s] outgoing discourse’ (p. 125).

Finally, there is the process of using these identity claims to ‘impress’ upon organisational ‘outsiders’ (Arrow 4 of Figure 2) – the counter-process of internalising organisational images. This involves taking the internal sense of identity formed during ‘expressing’ (e.g. organisational dress), and impressing this identity upon outsiders, so as to change or reinforce the image that outsiders hold of the organisation. Examples of such acts of impression are ‘corporate advertising, holding press conferences, providing information to business analysts, creating and using logos, building corporate facilities, or dressing in the corporate style’ (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, pp. 1002 – 1003). Note that the impressing process involves a degree of deliberateness on behalf of members of the organisation – it is distinct from any unintentional processes by which an organisation’s identity is communicated to outsiders.

In summary then, the underlying theoretical drive of my empirical work is to use Hatch & Schultz’s (2002) organisational identity theory as a means of understanding the drinking activities of a particular group of workers. My empirical work will seek to understand what role alcohol use and its associated experiences plays in each of Hatch & Schultz’s four identification processes. The use of an organisational identity theory in a work-alcohol study is one that I have not come across in my reading, and one that I see as being of considerable value for the work-alcohol field.
It is important that discussions of work-alcohol studies go beyond the rather simplistic conceptions of ‘culture’ that are mostly present in the literature today. It seems that the existing ‘cultural’ studies of the work-alcohol relationships conceptualise ‘culture’ in quite a simplistic way. Often culture is not even defined or approached from a fully developed theoretical base in such studies, assuming that the reader already has an understanding of the ‘culture’ concept that the authors are investigating in the study.

Because the field of organisational identity has been developed so significantly over the last two decades, there is a wealth of theoretical material to draw on and this allows examination of social life in organisations in quite an advanced way. In particular, a framework like that of Hatch & Schultz (2002) allows one to examine how the relationships between multiple facets of organisational life (i.e. culture, identity and image) might be a factor in the drinking activities of workers. Thus, through use of a well-developed theoretical base, the work-alcohol relationship can be theorised in a way that is more complex, and thus (hopefully) more true to the way that organisational members construct the work-alcohol relationship in their own minds.

In addition, a final reason why I see this use of organisational identity as valuable to the work-alcohol field is because it conceptualises the work-alcohol relationship as one that is multifaceted – an overlapping set of processes that involves three key factors; the organisation, the worker(s), and alcohol. This is in contrast to the more structuralist conception of the work-alcohol relationship as a linear, separated
process, which asks “how does work cause workers to use alcohol?”. Instead, the use of organisational identity theory allows one to ask “how is alcohol use a part of work and organisational life for workers?”⁸. In this way, investigations of how alcohol use and work might be connected in a more complex or ‘muddled’ relationship is better enabled through the use of organisational identity theory.

⁸ I would argue however that this is to some extent a question that is addressed by those work-alcohol researchers who adopt the aforementioned ‘cultural perspective’ (e.g. Ames & Janes, 1992).
Knowledge-Intensive Workplaces (KIWs)

Having established the potential value of an organisational identity perspective for the work-alcohol field, as well as the specific theoretical base I chose to underpin my empirical study, a new question comes to the fore; in what kinds of organisations might issues of organisational identity be significant in terms of their relationship to alcohol use? Having given a considerable amount of thought to this question, one particular setting struck me as especially relevant - ‘white collar’ or ‘corporate’ workplaces.

As my reading and understanding progressed, I came to better understand the group I was interested in as ‘knowledge workers’, working in ‘knowledge-intensive workplaces’ (KIWs). One of the most frequent questions I encountered when discussing my research with others is why I chose to focus on this particular group for a work-alcohol study. Before addressing this question, it is first necessary to obtain some kind of understanding of the meaning behind the term ‘knowledge intensive’. For the meantime however, I will say that I see KIWs as sites of intense organisational identity-related activity, thus making them very appropriate for a study that examines the identity-alcohol link. In addition, there have been very few studies that have specifically investigated the relationship between alcohol use and ‘white collar’ workplaces. In this way, a focus on KIWs serves to address this theoretical gap and consequently expand knowledge of the work-alcohol link.
Knowledge-Intensive Work ‘Defined’?

The term ‘knowledge-intensive’ comes with a degree of ambiguity and contestability, as noted by Alvesson (2004) and Blackler (1995). However, I see the term as one that is ‘vague but meaningful’ (Alvesson, 2004, p. 28). For the purposes of this study, ‘knowledge-intensive’ workplaces are defined as those workplaces that:

...revolve around the use of intellectual and analytical tasks, and are typically seen as requiring an extensive theoretical education and experience to be carried out successfully. Jobs [in knowledge-intensive workplaces] are not highly routine and call for some degree of creativity and adaptation to specific circumstances...Examples of knowledge-intensive firms include management and IT consultancies, and high tech and R&D based companies. Lawyers, accountants, consultants, engineers, and scientists belong to occupations involved in knowledge-intensive work (Alvesson, 2004, p. 1).

Clearly this is quite an extensive and detailed definition of the concept. However, my aim with this research was not to delve into debates as to what constitutes ‘knowledge’ or ‘knowledge intensity’. While these debates certainly have important theoretical outcomes, the focus of my research is more on developing an organisational identity-based theory of the work-alcohol relationship. Those sites that are loosely considered to be KIWs (e.g. consultancies, law and accounting firms) seemed to provide an appropriate setting for developing such theories.

Characteristics of KIWs and their Relationship to Work-Alcohol Theory

Discussions of KIWs often focus on those features that are characteristic of these types of organisations. Three main characteristics of KIWs that are relevant for this thesis are; the nature of control in KIWs, the ambiguity associated with work life in
KIWs, and the importance of organisational identity in KIWs. Drawing on the relevant literature, each of these characteristics are discussed in the following sub-sections, accompanied by explanations as to why these characteristics make KIWs a valuable site for developing theories of the work-alcohol relationship.

*Control*

According to many authors, KIWs can be characterised by the nature of the managerial controls in these types of organisations. More specifically, it is argued that management in KIWs utilise a less ‘visible’ and less direct form of managerial control to achieve the desired work behaviour from employees (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004). As Alvesson (2004) suggests, not all KIWs adopt identical approaches to control, with factors such as the work being undertaken and the size of the firm all impacting on the nature of the controls that are used. However, as Alvesson (2004) goes on to point out, ‘despite the variation, control targeted at the values, ideas, beliefs, emotions, and self-image of people characterises much management in [KIWs]’ (p. 129).

The reason for adopting these forms of control is attributable to the ambiguity of the work that KIWs undertake. Commenting on the work of Kunda (1992), Karreman & Alvesson (2009) assert that ‘knowledge-intensive firms operate in circumstances where behaviour in key respects might be out of reach of explicit efforts to organize and control, for example, where professionals make judgement calls in complex situations’ (p. 1117). The aim then for management in KIWs is to somehow embed an internal sense of control within employees. In this way, when carrying out tasks
and performing work for the organisation, employees will implicitly know what action or decision to make based on their integration with the culture and / or identity of the firm (Alvesson, 2004; Karreman & Alvesson, 2009).

How then do these types of controls manifest themselves in a real-world context? Empirical evidence suggests a number of different forms. Barker (1993) for example observed what he described as ‘concertive control’ in ‘self-managing teams’. On the surface, freedom from traditional management control in the form of an autonomous team would appear to represent a reduction in control over workers. Barker however suggests that given the smaller size of the ‘team’ compared to an entire organisation (and thus the increased visibility of each person’s work to one another), control actually intensified, but was instead dispersed amongst all members of the team, rather than being located ‘within’ one individual.

Grey (1994) also discusses the disciplinary features of the management techniques that were utilised in the accounting firm he studied. One particular technique was the ‘rating form’, whereby new employees were ranked by management on their performance and areas for improvement were identified. Karreman & Alvesson (2004) observed a similar procedure at the consulting firm they studied. Interestingly, many employees in Grey’s study saw the ratings as ‘unreflective’ of their work ‘performance’, but few resisted the process as many of the new trainees did not want to a) damage their ‘career prospects’ and b) speak up against a system that was ‘designed to help you maximise your capabilities and thereby enhance your career’ (p. 491).
In this way, employees had, at least to some extent, been indoctrinated by management into seeing such management techniques as both organisationally and personally functional. Authors such as Casey (1999) and Deetz (1994) explore this ‘indoctrination’, and examine the way in which management attempts to create organisational ‘cultures’ in order to get employees to ‘self-regulate’ their behaviour through normative or value-based means (Kunda, 1992). In this way, control is internalised by the employee, which supposedly allows for greater degrees of innovation and range of task behaviour on behalf of employees, something that is particularly useful for management in KIWs due to the variety of work tasks that workers might encounter (Alvesson, 1993; Alvesson & Karreman, 2004; Greenwood & Lachman, 1996).

The above discussion of the nature of control in KIWs raises a number of potential research avenues for work-alcohol theory. The preceding discussion of the features in KIWs could be linked to the conclusions of Seeman & Anderson (1983), who found that feelings of powerlessness were a much more accurate predictor of heavy drinking and problems with drinking than the ‘quality of work’ (measured via job satisfaction, complexity of work, and intrinsic reward in work). This might suggest that even those undertaking ‘knowledge-intensive work’, assuming such work affords the worker a high degree of satisfaction and intrinsic reward, a risky assumption in itself, are no more immune to heavy alcohol use than those in ‘non-knowledge-intensive work’. Rather, it is the nature of the power relationships at work (i.e. whether one feels empowered or not) that are key to understanding the work-alcohol link. This aspect of power and political activity in KIWs might be of significant importance for discussions of the work-alcohol relationship, and is an
issue I hope to investigate through my use of an organisational identity-based framework.

**Ambiguity**

It has been argued that KIWs are characterised by a high degree of ambiguity in all areas (Alvesson, 1994). Indeed Alvesson (1993) uses the term ‘ambiguity-intensive’ (as opposed to ‘knowledge-intensive’) to describe the unpredictable nature of work life in KIWs. In the first instance, the nature of the actual work KIWs undertake is said to be highly ambiguous (Alvesson, 1993; Alvesson, 1994). Given that KIWs are generally in the business of solving highly complex problems, the nature of a ‘working day’ from one day to the next can differ significantly for workers. Indeed Alvesson (2004) has suggested that ‘knowledge-intensive’ work itself, at a fundamental level, arises from ambiguities, which can only be clarified through the exploration and use of knowledge. In this way, knowledge-intensive work and ambiguity can be seen as mutually inclusive concepts.

Moreover, the results of the work undertaken by KIWs are supposedly very difficult to evaluate (i.e. the results of the work are again ambiguous), particularly for those ‘outside’ the firm, or those who are not ‘experts’ in the field in question (Alvesson, 1993). Because KIWs generally specialise in a very specific form of ‘knowledge’, more often than not they are the only ones that are actually capable of knowing what constitutes a ‘good job’. In addition, because of the intangible service-based nature of the work, there are no objective or concrete criteria by which to evaluate the quality of the work results. The intangible nature of the work also makes it difficult
to know whether a particular outcome of work undertaken by a KIW is indeed the result of the work undertaken by the knowledge workers, or another unrelated action or event (Alvesson, 1993; Alvesson, 2004).

A key question that arises in terms of alcohol use from this discussion of the ambiguity around work and work outcomes in KIWs, is how does such ambiguity impact on knowledge workers’ use of alcohol? Does it produce a sense of anxiety that subsequently leads to alcohol use? Or, on the contrary, is it seen by workers as a redeeming feature of their work (i.e. a sense of variety) that makes their job more enjoyable, with this sense of fulfilment thus acting as an effective substitute for the positive feelings that alcohol might have been used to induce? While these types of questions are not the main focus of the current study, they nevertheless represent an example of the ways in which KIWs might help to develop theories of the work-alcohol relationship.

KIWs also face a high degree of ambiguity in terms of their organisational image. That is, the way they portray themselves to clients is continuously in a state of change. Because of the difficulty in evaluating the results of the work KIWs undertake, clients or potential clients are left to judge KIWs on the claims they make as to their effectiveness (Alvesson, 1990). As a result, members of KIWs can often find themselves portraying very different images of the company depending on the needs and demands of the client or potential client (Grey, 1994). As a result, a sense of ambiguity (or ‘adaptability’) is often a desirable aspect of the outgoing discourse (Hatch & Schultz, 2002) of KIWs and their members.
Finally the nature of the work / non-work divide in KIWs is supposedly highly ambiguous. Where ‘work’ and ‘non-work’ times and spaces begin and end is said to be very difficult to identify in KIWs. Czarniawska & Mazza (2003) have described this ‘fuzziness’ around the work / non-work divide (if such a divide is even possible to determine in KIWs) as a form of ‘liminality’, a social ‘limbo’ or ‘Purgatory’ that is ‘in between’ one time and space and another. In the case of Czarniawska & Mazza (2003), they describe liminality in relation to consultants as follows:

*The liminal space in which consultancy rites take place is that of a liminal organization, as perceived by the consultants…A liminal organization shares its legal boundaries and physical environment with a proper work organization, but it forms a virtual space, experienced differently by consultants than by the regular employees (p. 273).*

The concept of liminality is highly relevant to the above discussion of organisational image in KIWs. It seems that KIWs, and professional services firms in particular, do a lot of their ‘image management’ in ‘liminal’ times and spaces, which are somewhere between the parameters of one organisation and another. For example, ‘entertaining’ clients with meals (Sturdy, Schwarz, & Spicer, 2006) or through corporate events (Alvesson, 2004) that might be held at the KIWs premises, but which entail a new and less ‘formal’ set of social meanings and rules, are an important way in which KIWs often communicate their desired organisational image to clients.

This ambiguity around organisational image and its cultivation in ‘liminal spaces’ also represents a very important area of interest for work-alcohol researchers. A key question in this respect is how is alcohol used in such acts of ‘image management’
(or ‘impressing’ as it is termed by Hatch & Schultz (2002))? For example, Sturdy, Schwarz & Spicer (2006) found that ‘the meal’ was an important medium through which consultants developed business relationships with clients.

In a related vein then, one could ask what role alcohol use plays in ‘liminal’ times and spaces that KIWs, and professional services firms in particular, create (such as client functions or parties) in order to construct an attractive image of the firm in the eyes of clients and potential clients. In addition, one could investigate how more informal uses of alcohol, such as discussing business ‘over a drink’ at a bar, forms a part of the overall process of ‘impressing’ upon potential business partners and clients for KIWs. Since the Hatch & Schultz (2002) framework I selected as the basis of my investigation explicitly incorporates organisational image, the above questions are some that I hope to address through my empirical study.

**Organisational Identity**

Issues of organisational identity are also (supposedly) highly prevalent in KIWs. This is due in large part to the nature of control in KIWs (discussed earlier), in that management in KIWs generally make a concerted attempt to regulate employees’ actions and behaviours through ‘value-based’ or intrinsic means (Alvesson, 2004). In addition, knowledge workers often face considerable challenges to forming a stable sense of identity due to the nature of their work. Such challenges include intense internal competition (related to promotion and career development) (Grey, 1994), the constant need to manage ‘image’ (at both a personal and organisational level) in order to attract new clients and maintain existing business networks (Alvesson, 1990;
Alvesson, 1993), and, importantly, the high degree of ambiguity that is prevalent in all areas of knowledge-intensive work (Alvesson, 2004; Karreman & Alvesson, 2004).

These identity issues at play in KIWs make them an ideal site for developing the organisational identity-alcohol relationship. As argued previously, this perspective on alcohol use has not yet been adopted in the work-alcohol field. Given that organisational identity seems to be a concept that is highly relevant to KIWs, it makes sense to utilise KIWs as a site through which an organisational identity-alcohol theory can be developed and explored.

In particular, the role of alcohol in coming to feel as though one is ‘a part of’ the organisation (what Hatch & Schultz (2002) call Expressing organisational identity) is of particular interest here. For example, based on my own conversations with knowledge workers, it would seem that management in such organisations deliberately host social events and ‘drinks nights’ for employees, supposedly in the interests of facilitating team bonding. As discussed in the ‘Control’ section above, such ‘bonding’ can be understood as a form of ‘concertive control’ (Barker, 1993) that is beneficial from a management standpoint, as it serves to tighten intra-organisational surveillance and expectations. The current study then aims to investigate the role of alcohol in such processes, framing them as a part of the overall process of organisational identification. Given that such processes are supposedly prevalent in KIWs, KIWs have subsequently been selected as the site in which the current study will develop understanding of this organisational identity-alcohol relationship.
Alcohol Use and KIW – Addressing a Theoretical Gap

From the above discussion, it is clear that the characteristics of KIWs make them a very suitable site for developing new theories of the work-alcohol relationship. In addition to the above discussion however, there are two further reasons for my focus on KIW. The first, is that to my knowledge, there are no studies that specifically examine the work-alcohol link in KIW. It is likely that such a gap has arisen as a result of the numerous sets of survey findings which conclude that ‘while collar’ or ‘professional / managerial workers’ are less at risk of being alcohol dependent and having ‘problems with alcohol’ than ‘blue collar’ workers (e.g. Hemmingsson et al., 1997; Parker & Harford, 1992). This focus on ‘blue collar’ workers (as opposed to ‘white collar’ workers) has dominated studies of work-alcohol research (e.g. Janes & Ames, 1989; Mazas et al., 2006).

Generally speaking, such studies tend to find that while basic alcohol use is greater amongst those in ‘white collar’ occupations, heavy use of alcohol and the frequency of alcohol-related problems are more prevalent amongst those in the ‘blue collar’ group. The first key problem with such conclusions is the arbitrary manner in which such groups are defined. What constitutes ‘white collar’ work is largely unclear, different authors have defined the term in a variety of different ways, excluding or including occupations that other authors did not. As suggested by Braverman (1974) in his work on labour process, the collar dichotomy is a rather meaningless way of categorising occupations in neo-capitalist societies due to the increasingly monotonous nature of many ‘white collar’ clerical occupations:
...the traditional distinctions between “manual” and “white-collar” labor, which are so thoughtlessly and widely used in the literature on this subject, represent echoes of a past situation which has virtually ceased to have meaning in the modern world of work. And with the rapid progress of mechanization in offices it becomes all the more important to grasp this (p. 326).

The second problem with such findings relates to the methodologies used to generate such conclusions. Though quantitative methods are no doubt useful research instruments, it seems that in many papers, authors go to strenuous extents to establish a correlation between job type and drinking activity using complex equations and calculations. Because of my own epistemological views, I find such conclusions problematic. As the methods of analysis and equations become more abstract, I cannot help but feel that the authors in these situations were perhaps constructing a relationship in mathematical terms that was not entirely accurate or reflective of the ‘real world’ they were attempting to ‘uncover’9. In addition, there are the ever present concerns about measuring alcohol intake and gaining ‘honest’ responses from those surveyed about their drinking activities. When these things are considered, the reliability of the occupational studies of alcohol use are problematised.

Aside from these methodological and epistemological concerns, the quantitative occupational studies of alcohol almost always find that ‘white collar’ workers are less likely to drink heavily, and less likely to have problems with alcohol than ‘blue collar’ workers (e.g. Hemmingsson et al., 1997; Parker & Harford, 1992). As a result, it would seem that researchers have neglected to undertake in-depth empirical

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9 I would also add that the notion of trying to ‘uncover’ a ‘real world’ is in itself problematic (as outlined later in my Methodology section), but I have used these terms so as align the argument with the philosophical basis of these positivistic researchers.
research in ‘white collar’ settings, assuming perhaps that because ‘white collar’ workers are seemingly the least ‘at risk’, there is no real impetus for further investigation. Through such a myopic focus, KIWs have been neglected by researchers, even though, as illustrated in the preceding discussion, there may be a wealth of work-alcohol activity occurring in such environments.

It is also likely that KIWs have not attracted much research attention due to the rhetorical nature of such terms. For many, the term ‘knowledge-intensive work’ has an array of positive connotations, including; work that is creative and innovative, workers who possess high educational qualifications and who are generally employed in lucrative work conditions (i.e. high pay, good employee benefits) that allow for a significant degree of personal autonomy (Alvesson, 2004). As Alvesson (2004) suggests, ‘knowledge-intensive work’ can be understood as a rhetorical construct, which establishes those organisations that identify themselves as ‘knowledge-intensive’ in an idealised way; ‘knowledge work and knowledge-intensive firms indicate something grandiose, intelligent, cutting-edge, and, almost by definition, leading to a positive impact’ (p. 231).

Given these considerations, the current study can, to some extent, be seen as an attempt to ‘deconstruct’ (Derrida, 1988) the rhetorical aspects of the ‘knowledge-intensive’ concept. Through examination of the potentially less ‘glamorous’ aspects of work life in KIWs, a more critical light can be shed on the rhetorical construct that is ‘knowledge-intensiveness’. Such ‘deconstructive’ studies of KIWs have already been conducted. For example, one supposed adverse feature of work life in KIWs are heavy workloads (Alvesson, 2004; Grey, 1994). Interestingly, these workloads,
particularly for new employees, are not always as ‘knowledge-intensive’ as the KIW label would imply. Grey (1994) found that new audit trainees in a large accounting firm had to absorb ‘extremely large quantities of technical knowledge’ (p. 483). Such ‘absorption’ was achieved chiefly through the monotonous repetition of routine tasks. For the trainees, undertaking this ‘bean counting’ work was seen as a means to promotion and of enhancing their ‘careers’ as professionals.

In this way, firms that would outwardly claim to be ‘knowledge-intensive’ can be seen as having a degree of mundane work that is often undertaken by interns or graduate workers. Such findings shed a novel light on the previously discussed work alienation-alcohol literature, and show how such alienation might also occur in KIWs. The relevance of such ‘deconstructive’ findings for the current study then is that both those studies and my own represent attempts to investigate how workers might find ‘knowledge-intensive work’ to be less ‘glamorous’ than the label would imply. In the current study, the ‘less glamorous’ aspect of the work that is of the most interest is employees’ alcohol use, and the ways in which their work might encourage heavy use of alcohol.

Conversely, the ways in which ‘knowledge-intensive work’ might inhibit workers’ alcohol use are of equal interest in the current study. Findings of this sort could actually be the most constructive from a public health perspective, as they might provide insight into what specific aspects of organisational life serve as effective mechanisms for limiting people’s heavy use of alcohol and the alcohol-related harms that result from such heavy use.
CHAPTER 3 - Methodology

Having established the theoretical space to which I intended to make my contribution, my next consideration was the methodology that would underpin my empirical investigation. As Guba & Lincoln (1994) and Morgan & Smircich (1980) point out however, one’s choice of methodology should ultimately be determined by their deeper ontological and epistemological assumptions. In accordance with this position, these two key aspects of my research design are discussed first, before going on to explain the subsequent research methodology that arose through exploring these ‘ontological and ‘epistemological questions’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108).

Ontology

It is my view that one’s ontological assumptions, or view of reality, are a highly subjective and personal set of beliefs. As suggested by Guba & Lincoln (1994), I am of the more relativistic view that ‘no construction [i.e. individual’s view of reality] is or can be incontrovertibly right; advocates of any particular construction must rely on persuasiveness and utility rather than proof in arguing their position’ (p. 108). It is my aim here then to outline why I have found the insights of a constructivist ontology to be the most ‘persuasive’, and also to explain why I see the constructivist ontology as having a high degree of ‘utility’ in terms of enhancing my potential to contribute to theory on alcohol, organisational identity, and KIWs.
The constructivist ontology views realities as:

...apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and dependent for their form and content on individual persons or groups holding the construction10 (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).

The above definition can be somewhat complex at first reading, but at a basic level, it suggests that ‘social realities’ (the ‘social reality’ of interest in the current study is the organisational identity-alcohol relationship) are subjective and dependent on a number of factors, such as an individual or group’s existing cultural / historical understandings and values. In short, what is socially ‘true’ is subject and context dependent. From a constructivist standpoint, all understandings and theories of social reality are constructed in the mind by individuals and / or groups of individuals as a collective (Morgan & Smircich, 1980).

The subjectivity that is central to constructivism can be contrasted with the views of ‘positivism’, which suggest that ‘truths’ exist independent of human perception or values, and that such ‘truths’ can be fully ‘discovered’ if the scientific methods employed are appropriate enough for the situation at hand (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). ‘Post positivism’ adopts a similar view, but differs in its belief that such objective ‘truths’ can only ever be ‘partially understood’ by humans given our cognitive and intellectual limitations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

10 Note here that this ‘definition’ is in itself a construction by the authors quoted, but one that I see as persuasive and aligned with my own existing beliefs / values.
I see the constructivist ontology described by Guba & Lincoln (1994) as being particularly useful for the current study for two reasons. The first, is that it is an ontology that underpins the line of theory that I have drawn on for the concept of organisational identity. Kenny, Whittle, & Willmott (2012) have argued that studies of organisational identity can be broadly grouped into two main streams – those that view identity as a ‘property or asset’ of an organisation (the ‘realist’ conception) and those that view identity as a set of representations articulating beliefs (the ‘constructionist’ conception). Over the course of my reading, I certainly found myself to be more comfortable, in terms of my own personal viewpoint, with these ‘constructionist’ studies of organisational identity, where the focus is on the claims organisational members make about their organisation, and investigation of the various processes through which such claims come to be made and / or believed by organisational members.

I believe it was this comfort with the ‘constructionist’ conception of organisational identity that in large part led me to adopt Hatch & Schultz (2002) framework as my theoretical guide. In some ways then, I did not ‘select’ a constructivist ontology in any explicit fashion. Rather, it emerged naturally in the decisions I made during the literature review stage of my research, and I thought it made sense to maintain this ‘worldview’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) throughout the rest of the research.

The second reason I see constructivism as useful for the current study, is because such an ontology has a significant amount of value to contribute to theory on work-alcohol. As outlined in the literature review, the majority of the literature on the work-alcohol relationship appears to come from a positivist / post positivist
paradigm. These work-alcohol studies seem in large part to view the relationship as one that exists independent of the researchers own values and perception, with the strength and specific co-relational elements of the work-alcohol relationship able to be ‘discovered’ if the methods of analysis are refined enough.

It is my argument however that the work-alcohol ‘relationship’ is not latent and waiting to be ‘discovered’. Rather, the way in which these two phenomena are linked (if indeed at all) is entirely an individual and / or social construction on behalf of the researcher (or researchers). The way in which the relationship is theorised and consequently investigated will determine ‘what the nature’ of the relationship is. In addition, the way in which the relationship is ‘constructed’ or theorised will also depend upon how it has been constructed by the subjects of each specific study. However, I do not see this subjectivity as a disadvantage, but rather as a strength and a viewpoint that seems to be missing from the current work-alcohol literature.

An important addition to the current work-alcohol field is a study that directly investigates the perceptions and views of individuals on their use of alcohol, and how it is / is not related to their work lives. Through such investigation, it would be possible to get insight into how individuals have constructed their use of alcohol in their own minds, and what indeed the use of alcohol means to them personally and / or to their social group. This last statement essentially summarises the epistemology (perspective on how one obtains knowledge about ‘reality’ (Lincoln, 1985)) that arises out of the constructivist ontology I have chosen to adopt.
Guba & Lincoln (1994) assert that one’s choice of ontology subsequently constrains their choice of epistemology. They go on to suggest that use of a constructivist ontology would lead to use of a ‘transactional / subjectivist’ epistemology. According to Morgan & Smircich (1980) the ‘subjectivist’ approach to social science leads to a ‘basic epistemological stance’ that ‘seeks to understand how social reality is created’ (p. 492). This is similar to the assertion of Whittle, Kenny & Willmott (2012), who at the level of organisational identity, suggest that ‘constructionist’ studies of organisational identity aim to study organisational identity through ‘analysis of sense making processes whereby meanings are constructed in context-contingent ways by different actors’ (p. 129).

This is an important point for the current study, as the theoretical framework of Hatch & Schultz (2002) that I have selected to guide my empirical study is focused very much on identification processes, rather than any concrete form of identity itself. In other words, my study can be seen as an attempt to investigate, through the use of a subjectivist epistemology (Morgan & Smircich, 1980) how the ‘social reality’ of organisational identity is created, and what role the use of alcohol plays, if any, in creating this social reality (i.e. in processes of organisational identification). As a result of this deeper epistemological consideration, I was able to develop my overarching research question that would guide my empirical inquiry:

What is the role of alcohol use in the four processes of organisational identification described by Hatch & Schultz (2002)?
**Induction, Deduction and Abduction**

According to Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009), an ‘inductive’ approach to empirical research ‘proceeds from a number of single cases and assumes that a connection that has been observed in all these is also generally valid’ (p. 3). Tolich & Davidson (1999) describe this as ‘leav[ing] formal theory ‘at the door’’ and build[ing] theory solely based on the data collected’ (p. 20). On the other hand, ‘deduction…proceeds from a general rule and asserts that this rule explains the single case’ (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 3).

In the middle of the continuum between these two extremes is the ‘abductive’ approach, in which the single case is interpreted from a ‘hypothetic overarching pattern, which, if it were true, explains the case in question’ (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 4). Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009) describe this abductive approach as a ‘hermeneutic process during which the researcher, as it were, eats into the empirical matter with the help of theoretical pre-conceptions, and also keeps developing and elaborating the theory’ (pp. 5 – 6). This ‘hermeneutic’ approach is consistent with the hermeneutic methodology that Guba & Lincoln (1994) suggest to employ when carrying out constructivist studies.

When framed in this way, my research approach certainly appears to fit with the ‘abductive’ model described by Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009). In this case, the use of Hatch & Schultz’s (2002) organisational identification framework can be seen as the ‘hypothetic overarching pattern’ that I have elected to use as a guide for my empirical work. The aim of the abductive approach is then to strengthen the
overarching hypothetic pattern (in terms of the way it theorises organisational identity) based on the new cases (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). This is exactly what I hoped to contribute to the field of organisational studies through my application of an organisational identity framework to a work-alcohol context.

In addition to the theoretical benefits of an abductive approach, I saw the use of a pre-formulated identity framework as useful in dealing with the sheer complexity of the topic. This thesis represents my first substantive experiences with organisational identity concepts, and as a result, I felt as though a pre-established framework provided me with the structure I needed to generate ‘trustworthy’ and ‘authentic’ findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

If I were to adopt an entirely inductive approach to the empirical work, I believe the complexity of the phenomena under study would have made it very difficult to generate any coherent insights into organisational identity and / or alcohol use. I also found during my literature review phase that a vast number of theories and frameworks on organisational identity had already been developed through robust data collection and research experience (e.g. Hatch & Schultz (2004) provide an excellent sample of some of the most important studies). It seemed redundant then to attempt to build a new organisational identity theory given the wealth of existing theoretical material that I had at my disposal.
The next key decision I had to make was whether to adopt a quantitative or qualitative approach to data collection. To a large extent however, this was decided for me whilst establishing my space for contribution to the work-alcohol field and in the above consideration of ontology and epistemology. Upon my decision to introduce a ‘new’ perspective into the work-alcohol arena, an exploratory element was immediately introduced into the study. As discussed in the preceding section, while the study would not adopt an entirely inductive approach, the study was nevertheless to involve the application of theory that was new to the work-alcohol field. That is, the application of the concept of organisational identity in the form of the Hatch & Schultz (2002) framework.

As a result of this exploratory element of the study, as well as my adoption of a constructivist ontology, qualitative research seemed to be an appropriate research methodology. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) succinctly describe the ‘qualitative’ research tradition in the following manner:

*The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (p. 10).*

A key aspect of this description for me was the reference to the ‘how’ of social reality, and the authors’ assertion that qualitative research methods are well suited to
investigating phenomena that are complex and ‘socially constructed’. Having settled on a frame of inquiry (an organisational identity perspective on work-alcohol), my broad, overarching research aim was to examine how alcohol was used in processes of organisational identification, as is evidenced in my research question. To use the words of Denzin & Lincoln (2005), my study was certainly an attempt to understand how the ‘social experiences’ of both alcohol use and organisational identification might be related and give one another their respective social meanings.

In this sense then, I was very much interested in the interpretations and perceptions of knowledge workers themselves, having identified this group as one that works in environments where alcohol use and organisational identification activities might be particularly intense or prevalent. Thus, a qualitative approach seemed far more appropriate for my empirical work, given that my research focus was on the general nature of a relationship (or set of relationships), rather than its strength or intensity in quantitative terms. A qualitative approach would allow me to obtain the in-depth data needed to understand the experiences of knowledge workers in terms of alcohol use and the identification processes at play in those types of organisations.

Another aspect of the Denzin & Lincoln (2005) description of qualitative research that I found appealing was the importance that the qualitative approach attributes to the researcher in the research process. Tolich & Davidson (1999) describe this as ‘reflexivity’;

*They [the researchers’ pre-existing assumptions and biases] impact on the research at every step of the research process. The value judgements of the researcher are an*
During my Honours year at university, I found that on a personal level, I identified quite strongly with the lessons of social constructionism. The view of research as an act of interpretation, rather than one of ‘discovering truths’ certainly appealed to my own ‘worldview’. I view the current thesis in the same way. Ultimately, it is best considered as my own interpretation of the work-alcohol relationship, informed by the existing interpretations of others (i.e. previous research, and data collected from those individuals who participated in my empirical inquiry).

In addition, it would be quite a stretch to suggest that my choice of methodology was solely based on what ‘suited the topic’ under investigation. Instead, I certainly feel as though my own pre-existing (i.e. existing before entering into the thesis process) ontological and epistemological views (discussed above) shaped my selection of the research topic. I have framed the research topic in quite an open-ended way, which I believe is the result of my own constructivist views of the world and reality. The allowance for such reflexivity was thus an important consideration for my adoption of a qualitative approach to data collection.

**Why a Single Case Study?**

With my underlying research approach developed, I then had to decide on the number of organisations that I would investigate. While a larger number would provide opportunities to compare and contrast across different organisations, a ‘case
study’ investigation of a single organisation was more appealing for reasons discussed below. Yin (2009) describes a case study as ‘an empirical inquiry, that; investigates, a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ (p. 18).

In some ways, I have reservations about labelling my approach a ‘case study’. While the interviews were conducted solely with members at a single organisation, the intensiveness of the study and the methods used are perhaps undeserving of Yin’s (2009) ‘case study’ label, given that Yin recommends ‘data triangulation’ as a core aspect of a case study approach (i.e. the use of a number of different methods of data collection, which I did not do). Nevertheless, the fact that only one organisation or ‘unit of analysis’ was used as the foundation of my study means that the ‘case study’ label is probably appropriate.

As both Pettigrew (1973) and Yin (2009) suggest, case studies aim to study phenomena in their contexts. This made a case study design suited to my particular topic, as the context (the organisation and its identity) was of as much interest as the phenomena under study (alcohol use). The overarching aim of the study was to understand the link between context and phenomena, and I believe a case study approach provided this. In the event I attempted to gather data from numerous organisations, it would have been exceptionally difficult to try and understand both the nature of each firm’s identification process on the one hand (i.e. context), and the nature of interviewees’ alcohol use on the other (i.e. phenomena), as well as the overall relationship between these factors across different organisations.
Also, given the fact that I had a limited timeframe and resources at my disposal (in terms of data collection, transcription and analysis), interviews at a single firm seemed to be much more ‘do-able’ and ‘manageable’ than attempting to liaise with multiple organisations. In addition, negotiating agreements with multiple organisations would have taken a far greater amount of time, and would probably have made it very difficult to complete the data collection and subsequent analysis within the required timeframe. Thus, a case study in this situation, as well as being appropriate for the type of research question I hoped to answer, was also logistically a more appropriate avenue given the limitations of a Master’s thesis.

Another important factor that resulted in my adoption of a ‘case study’ approach was gaining access to an organisation in which to conduct the research. Clearly the topic under investigation could be very sensitive for both individuals discussing it (in terms of emotional impact) and for an organisation if competitors or clients were to uncover some of the less ‘favourable’ aspects of the firm’s activities through my thesis (e.g. a ‘heavy drinking culture’). Ultimately then, I was in the hands of the senior individuals at the company as to whether I would be able to collect the research data I needed. Fortunately, through an existing connection of my supervisor, I was able to make contact with a senior individual at a professional services firm - ORGA (pseudonym). After meeting with the senior individual, who would later act as the distributor of my information sheet to workers at the firm, he agreed to grant me access to workers at the firm’s office in Wellington, New Zealand, to conduct interviews. Through use of a case study approach, I only had to gain access to a
single organisation, rather than spending valuable time attempting to negotiate access agreements with many organisations.

**Why Interviews?**

The qualitative researcher has a vast number of potential data collection methods at their disposal. When operating from a qualitative base, the key methods of data collection are interviews (of which there are many forms), observation, focus groups, and open-ended questionnaires (O’Leary, 2010). For my study, I elected to use semi-structured interviews. The reasons for this choice are outlined below.

In the first instance, observation wasn’t really a viable avenue for ‘ethical’ reasons. My initial research proposal included an observational component, which was to involve attending ‘after work drinks’ and corporate functions hosted by ORGA. The idea was to have a secondary source to supplement the primary interview data, so as to gain some insight into workers’ actual behaviour (in addition to their claims about their behaviour) around alcohol and at social functions. Also, being able to engage workers in conversation in a less structured or formal setting was thought to be quite valuable in terms of gaining more ‘honest’ responses to some of my areas of interest. I thought that workers might feel more comfortable in such a situation and be more inclined to ‘open up’ about their perceptions.

However, the observational aspect of my research design was eventually omitted due to issues gaining ethical clearance from the university to conduct the observation. In particular, there were concerns regarding the ethicality of collecting data from
individuals who were ‘under the influence’ of alcohol, as well as concerns about being unable to obtain written consent from those at such functions, and being unable to provide them with full details about the research project prior to their ‘participation’ in it. As a result of these concerns, the proposed observational component of the research study was not an option for data collection.

Secondly, I didn’t believe that a questionnaire was a very effective method for collecting data. For one, such data can be collected much more easily through conversational rather than written means. In addition, questionnaires are a very rigid form of communication. Specific points cannot be immediately clarified, so clarification must instead be obtained through follow up questionnaires or conversations. In other words, I saw interviews as being a much more efficient means of collecting data than an open-ended questionnaire. One advantage of an anonymous questionnaire would perhaps be that more ‘honest’ answers could be obtained, but given the confidential nature of my research, I did not see honesty and openness as being too much of an issue if a non-anonymous method of data collection was used.

This ultimately left me with the decision between focus groups and interviews. Focus groups offer the advantage of having multiple individuals (often from similar backgrounds, which means a degree of established understanding amongst them) involved in the same discussion. The supposed advantage of this is that it means the conversation can evolve naturally amongst the participants, rather than being forced or directed by the researcher. The use of focus groups then can result in areas that would not otherwise be discussed in interviews coming to the fore (O’Leary, 2010).
In other words, there is potential to generate both a greater amount of data, as well as more detailed data given that focus groups are more akin to a group conversation.

However, I felt that the logistics of organising focus groups (i.e. coordinating a group of people to all meet at the same time) would have been very difficult given the busy schedules of the workers at knowledge-intensive workplaces. In addition, I thought that given the sensitive nature of the alcohol topic (as well as the potential sensitivity of participants’ views on their own workplace), it would be very difficult to get the participants to be totally honest and open in a room with their professional colleagues, as they might fear that expressing their honest views could be detrimental to such relationships and/or to their career. This issue around honesty and openness was ultimately what ruled out focus groups as a method of data collection.

Overall then, I saw interviews as the most appropriate method of data collection for the current study. Interviews provided a private setting that would (hopefully) facilitate an open and honest discussion. In addition, interviews would be efficient and easy to co-ordinate with participants in the study (i.e. times could be made for each individual rather than trying to co-ordinate a group).

I chose to use semi-structured interviews over other forms for a number of reasons. The first is because a semi-structured format established the interview as more of a natural conversation. I felt as though having a high degree of ‘informality’ to the discussions was important given the content of the interviews. It would be very
difficult to gain data about what could be quite a personal activity (that is, alcohol use) from interviewees if they felt as though they were being ‘interrogated’ or treated in a ‘clinical’ fashion. I hoped that a more relaxed structure that could be suited to the specific interviewee in question would make for a more personal and relaxed feel to the interviews, which would ultimately make interviewees feel comfortable about their participation in the study (O’Leary, 2010).

In addition, semi-structured interviews allowed me to investigate new themes and lines of inquiry as they arose in interviews. This was important for me because of the fact that my study was an attempt to apply a new framework to the work-alcohol relationship. As a result, it was important that an diverse range of data was collected so as to accurately represent the views of the participants, and consequently, to accurately theorise the relationship between organisational identity and alcohol use.

Finally, the semi-structured interview format was a style that I had previous experience with in my Honours study. This prior experience provided me, as the researcher, with a degree of comfort. On reflection, I believe this comfort with the method of data collection was important because I was able to identify valuable prompts and new questions during the interview. I do not think this would have been the case had I been trying to use an entirely new style of interview than what I was used to.

16 interviews were thus conducted with members of ORGA. Come the final interview, I felt as though the themes that were arising were very similar to those
previously discussed with other interviewees. As a result, I feel that while more data is always better for ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘authenticity’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), any additional interviews would have been of little additional value in terms of answering my research question. Glaser & Strauss (1967) label this concept ‘data saturation’, that is, ‘the point in data collection when no new additional data are found that develop aspects of a conceptual category’ (Francis et al., 2010, p. 1230). In addition to feeling a sense of data saturation, I would also add that I stopped at the sixteenth interview due to the time limitations of my thesis. Upon completion of the sixteenth and final interview, there was a need to move on the analysis stage of the research, which thus prevented me from conducting any additional interviews.

About ORGA

In the interests of maintaining confidentiality, only limited information can be disclosed about the company that constituted my case study – ORGA (pseudonym). ORGA is a professional services firm with offices in multiple international locations. ORGA offers multiple professional services to clients (such as tax and consulting). I conducted my interviews with members of ORGA’s Wellington office, which had a staff of over 100 people. From the above description, it is evident that ORGA is the epitome of a ‘knowledge-intensive workplace’ as defined in my literature review. Thus, it served as an excellent site for investigating how work and alcohol might be related in a knowledge-intensive setting.
Developing an Interview Schedule

Since I was conducting semi-structured interviews, the interview schedule I developed acted more as a guide for the interviews than a strict questionnaire. I believed it was important to address four key areas in the interview; basic information about interviewees, their alcohol use, how the Hatch & Schultz organisational identification processes might ‘play out’ in ORGA (and the role of alcohol in these processes), and finally, interviewees’ general thoughts on the relationship between their work and their alcohol use. I initially tried to find examples of previous interview schedules that researchers had used when conducting work-alcohol studies, but given the novelty of my research focus, none of these were suited to my purposes. Thus, I was left to construct the interview schedule / questions ‘from scratch’ (see Appendix 1 for the interview schedule I developed).

The first section of the schedule served two purposes. The first purpose was to gain the basic information needed to understand participants’ current situations and the nature of their work. In order to make any connection between work-alcohol, it was necessary to understand both aspects of the relationship in sufficient detail. This section of the interview schedule addressed the ‘work side’ of the relationship, and aimed to obtain a fairly detailed picture about the nature of work at a KIW.

The second function of this ‘basic information’ section of the interview was to establish a degree of comfort between myself (as interviewer) and the interviewees. This was an important function, as it served to lay the social foundations for the more ‘sensitive’ discussions about alcohol use that were to come next. I hoped that interviewees would be as open as possible with me about their drinking activities.
after having answered some less personal questions beforehand. Establishing this comfort was also important for ‘opening up’ the discussions about ORGA’s identity, which for some, could be a particularly personal area of discussion if they identified strongly with the company (which many I think did).

The second section of the interview schedule aimed to determine the nature of the interviewees’ drinking activities. The overall objective of my study was to investigate how drinking was related to organisational identification, not to obtain precise measures of alcohol intake. In this way, the overall nature of interviewees alcohol use was of the most interest to me. As a result, the aim in this second section was to enter into a general discussion with the participants about the nature of their alcohol use. Rather than asking very direct questions about interviewees’ alcohol use (e.g. ‘how often do you drink alcohol?’), the aim was to get interviewees to ‘paint a picture’ of their alcohol use through narratives of their drinking activities.

This was achieved by asking interviewees to describe ‘an average week’ in terms of how much they would drink, how often, in what places, and who with. This proved to be a very successful technique and I was able to gain a fairly accurate picture of interviewees’ alcohol use (ignoring the ever present issues of the accuracy of self-reporting). This technique was recommended to me by a fellow researcher who had experience with interview-based studies of drug and alcohol use (e.g. Hutton, 2010). The basic premise of this ‘narrative’ approach to the second section of the interview, was that participants would give a greater amount of detail about their drinking in an extended anecdotal account than they would in short answers to direct questions. In addition, obtaining this information in anecdotal form gave the interviewees’
drinking activities context, and thus provided further insight into why they used alcohol in the way(s) that they did.

The third section of the interview aimed to explore the nature of the organisational identification processes (based on Hatch & Schultz’s framework) at the participants’ organisation, and what role alcohol played in each one of these processes. A broad question was posed to interviewees that aimed to explore each ‘identification process’ (mirroring, reflecting, expressing, and impressing). Within each of these questions, I made a concerted effort to probe for any alcohol use on behalf of participants that could be construed as being undertaken in the each of these four identification processes.

The final section of the interview was intended as a ‘catch all’, which allowed for investigation of issues that might not have come to the fore in the other sections of the interview. Rather than working from organisational identification towards alcohol, this section worked in the opposite manner. The aim in this final section of the interview schedule was to begin from discussions of work-related alcohol use, and examine how such work-related alcohol use might be framed as processes of organisational identification.

**Interviewee Recruitment**

Given the sensitive nature of my research topic, gaining access to an organisation in which to conduct my interviews was initially one of my biggest concerns regarding the research project. I thought it unlikely that organisations, particularly KIWs who, as mentioned previously, often trade immensely on their reputation and name
would agree to a Masters student obtaining very sensitive information about their employees’ drinking activities. As mentioned previously, my selection of an organisation at which to conduct interviews was largely based on circumstance rather than any deliberate selection on my behalf.

Selecting a case study in terms of convenience as I have here could have some implications for the data that was subsequently collected. For example, the fact that the organisation was receptive to the project could mean that they felt as though they had ‘nothing to hide’ in terms of the drinking activities of the workers. This might stand in contrast to an organisation where drinking activities were more intense amongst the workers. Such an organisation might not have agreed to participate in the study as they might have feared such information would somehow become public and adversely affect their reputation. This potential limitation of my method of case study selection is worth keeping in mind when interpreting the findings of this study. That is, that because of the way in which the case was selected, the nature of workers’ drinking activities as described in the findings here (and their subsequent relationship to organisational identity) may not be entirely representative of other KIWs or professional services firms.

ORGA was very receptive to my research project, and the senior individual who acted as my ‘key person’ at the organisation agreed to distribute a research information sheet\(^\text{11}\) to employees at the firm. This was deemed the most efficient way of recruiting interview participants at the firm. Payne & Payne (2004) refer to this kind of participant recruitment as an ‘open sample’, while Duff (2003) labels it

\(^{11}\) See Appendix 2 for the Research Participant Information Sheet that was distributed to ORGA members, and Appendix 3 for the Research Participant Consent Form that all interviewees signed prior to their interview, in accordance with my university’s ethical policies.
‘opportunistic self-sampling’. In addition, it could have been construed as unethical (or indeed illegal) for ORGA to provide me with a list of their employees and their contact details. Working in such a fashion, where I contacted the employees directly, was not a viable option for recruitment for these legal and ethical reasons.

While the use of an ‘open sample’ was certainly convenient, it is open to a few areas of criticism. Recruiting interviewees in this way can potentially generate a skewed or unrepresentative sample (O’Leary, 2010). The main concern in this respect is that a ‘certain type of person’ volunteers to be interviewed, meaning that the data obtained across all interviewees comes from a similar perspective or standpoint. For example, only those individuals who are comfortable talking about drinking and ORGA may have volunteered, which means that the data collected may not be representative of the views of all those who work at ORGA (e.g. what about the views of those who are not comfortable talking about their drinking?). This is an important point to bear in mind when considering the representativeness of the following findings (i.e. it is not possible to say that the findings are entirely representative of the views of all members of ORGA).

**Nature of the Interviewees**

Initially, I had hoped to conduct interviews with ‘young’ (defined as 24 years old or younger) employees at the firm, given that this would be an age group that would be new to the firm and where, supposedly, the identification processes described by Hatch & Schultz (2002) would be most prevalent. However, after my ‘first round’ of distributing the information sheet, only 6 individuals who were ‘24 or under’ had
volunteered to be interviewed. So as to obtain a great amount of data then, the age criteria was relaxed to those individuals under 30 years old. As I found out later however, this was more or less redundant because most of the workers at the firm were under 30 years old anyway. Only the senior individuals at ORGA tended to be over 30 years old, of which there were few, in accordance with the ‘up-or-out’ promotion model that professional services firms tend to operate (Morris & Pinnington, 1998).

At the end of data collection, 16 interviews were conducted with members of ORGA. 2 of the individuals interviewed would be considered high ranking or senior members, 3 would be intermediate-high ranking, and 10 were in the junior levels of the firm. In addition, one interview was conducted with an individual responsible for organising ORGA’s various functions and client events, so as to obtain some descriptive data about the nature of these events. The average age of participants was 28, with the oldest being 55, and the youngest being 21. The gender split was 9 males to 7 females, which, as I was later informed by one interviewee, was fairly representative of the firm’s overall gender split. This diversity amongst the interviewees was useful as I was able to get a range of different perspectives on the issues I was investigating, which I think served to make the findings more ‘authentic’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) to all of ORGA’s members, not just a certain sub-group.

12 From Morris & Pinnington (1998): ‘Professional firms conventionally use up-or-out promotion policies excluding from permanent tenure all but those offered partnership (Gilson & Mnookin, 1985; Nelson, 1988; Smigel, 1969). Professional employees are typically hired prior to qualification and, following completion of their training are usually guaranteed employment until the decision to elect to partner is made (Galanter & Palay, 1991; Wholey, 1985). If employees fail to obtain promotion to partner within a certain time period they are expected to quit or are dismissed’ (p. 5). As a result of this model, most professional services firms generally have a large base of ‘junior’ employees hired directly from university, who report to a very select (i.e. small) group of senior individuals. The highest ranks of the senior group are generally ‘partners’ who hold a direct equity stake in the firm (Morris & Pinnington, 1998).
In terms of divisions, I was able to obtain a good variety of interviewees from the
different divisions within the firm. In the interests of confidentiality, the exact names
of the firm’s divisions cannot be disclosed, but overall it was largely an equal split
between each of the divisions. There was one division that was certainly
underrepresented in the interviews however, with only one interviewee from this
area of the firm electing to do an interview. It seemed from the interview data that
the firm was quite segregated in this respect, in that individuals often identified
strongly with their particular team or group or division. It seemed that each of the
divisions possessed its own sub-cultures and value sets, and in this way, it is possible
that the absence of this particular division’s input into the study could have an effect
on the representativeness of the data (i.e. whether the data would reflect the views of
the majority of ORGA’s members).

Based on some of the interviewees’ comments, it seemed that members of this
particular division worked quite long hours, with the junior staff undertaking quite
‘menial’ work as described by one interviewee. Another interviewee described the
division as a ‘meat grinder’, the implication being that the work was fairly
unglamorous, repetitive and mundane. In this way, it is possible that those in the
underrepresented division may have simply not had the time to do an interview.
Other speculative reasons for a lack of participation may be that this division of the
firm, as a result of the supposed distinction between the nature of their work and that
of the rest of the firm, considered themselves to be somewhat separate from the rest
of the firm, and thus did not feel their views would fit with those of the others. These
are merely speculative reasons, but are important considerations in terms of generalising the data and subsequent findings to the entirety of ORGA.

The location of the interviews was left up to interviewees to decide. Ultimately, 14 of the interviews were conducted at ORGA’s premises in a pre-booked meeting room, so as to ensure privacy and confidentiality. 2 of the interviewees elected to conduct their interviews at a nearby cafe, perhaps preferring to keep the discussion away from the workplace entirely. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by myself.

**Data Analysis**

To analyse the interview data that was collected, I chose to utilise ‘thematic analysis’, which Boyatzis (1998) describes as follows:

*Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information. The encoding requires a specific ‘code’. This may be a list of themes; a complex model with themes, indicators, and qualifications that are causally related; or something in between these two forms (p. vii).*

Thematic analysis then can be understood as the process of identifying themes in a set of data, where a theme is a common pattern that arises across the data set. Boyatzis (1998) goes on to point out that: ‘the themes may be initially generated inductively from the raw information or generated deductively from theory and prior research.’ (p. vii). For the current study, I chose to maintain the Hatch & Schultz (2002) framework as the basis for my theme development, since it had already
formed the basis of my interview schedule. I constructed each of the four organisational identification processes in Hatch & Schultz’s framework as a main theme. The use of a prior framework or set of themes is consistent with the recommendations of Bauer (2000), who asserts that themes should be grounded in the research question and theoretical framework that the researcher begins from (in this case, organisational identity) to ensure the research question is actually answered (rather than developing themes inductively from the data, which can lead to tangential or unrelated findings). It is also consistent with the abductive approach to empirical inquiry described earlier in the Methodology section (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009).

In terms of the technical aspects of analysis, the interviews were first digitally transcribed verbatim, which was an effective way of ‘reading over’ all the interview data. Following transcription, a table was created based on Hatch & Schultz’s (2002) four processes of organisational identification (the main themes in this case); Mirroring, Reflecting, Expressing, and Impressing. In addition, a row was added labelled ‘Other Themes’ so as to provide a space to discuss interview data that was important, but unrelated to organisational identity.

Each of the processes was then divided into a more detailed set of processes or activities based on a second reading of the interview data and my impression from the interviews themselves. These were essentially the ‘key themes’ that I saw as most prominent across all the interviews. Each interview transcript was read through line by line, with each section of interviewee’s speech being categorised into themes in the coding table. In accordance with the recommendations of Boyatzis (1998),
each theme was accompanied by a definition to ensure accurate matching of interview data with the appropriate theme(s). Data that could fit under two or more themes was coded under each relevant theme (i.e. each piece of data was allowed to fit under more than one theme). The most recurrent themes in each identification process became clear quite quickly based on which themes had the most amount of transcribed speech or data contained within them.

The ‘Other Themes’ section of the table was largely comprised of useful descriptive information, such as the type of drinks offered at ORGA functions, the nature of ‘drunkenness’ at ORGA-hosted functions, and what times of the week interviewees would use alcohol. These themes provided a good base from which to develop the ‘Descriptive Findings’ of the study. These descriptive findings provided a snapshot of interviewees’ drinking activities, and the nature of ORGA-hosted social events.

The final table of the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from analysis of the interview data can be found in Appendix 4. In total, 5 main themes were generated, which would eventually represent the 5 main sections of my findings. In total, 24 sub-themes were generated, each with a substantial amount of interview data to support them. Most of these 24 themes would then go on to represent a sub-section of my findings section. However, not all themes were included as a standalone section in the findings, as they were not a major part of my research focus. For example, while stress and its relationship to alcohol use was a strong theme, it has been well covered by other authors already as outlined in my literature review (e.g. Frone, 1999). Unless a sub-theme, such as stress for example, was somehow related to organisational identification, it did not form a standalone part of my findings.
CHAPTER 4 - Findings

Introduction

The broad, overarching conclusion that I drew from the empirical interview data, was that the social drinking act provided an important medium for interviewees to engage in a variety of organisational identification processes – from reflecting on work life with colleagues, to impressing the identity of the company upon potential new clients in an effort to gain new business. Before elaborating on this conclusion, it is important to note the distinction that emerged in the interviews between the ‘social drinking act’ and the ‘physiological effect of alcohol’. It would appear that the ‘social drinking act’ and all of its intricacies were more significant for the interviewees than the physiological or psychoactive properties of the alcohol itself. However, both still played important roles in different situations.

The ‘social drinking act’ is defined here as the possession and / or consumption of an alcoholic substance with a broader group of individuals. The ‘physiological effect of alcohol’ is defined as the chemical effect (perceived or actual) of an alcoholic substance on a person’s state of consciousness. These definitions are significantly more detailed than the very general term ‘alcohol use’ (i.e. the consumption of alcohol) that I used prior to analysing the interview data. This is an important point for those who engage with the following findings, because each aspect of alcohol use often served very different purposes depending on the individual using it, and the situations in which alcohol was used. This two-part definition of alcohol use can be diagrammatically represented as follows:
The following findings are grouped into two major parts, with each part having a number of sub-sections. The first part presents what I have termed the ‘descriptive findings’ of the study. These findings examine the times, amounts, places, and frequency with which interviewees would use alcohol, as well as the ways in which ORGA provided alcohol to its members at occasions such as ‘Friday night drinks’ and end of year balls. The aim of this section is to establish a thorough descriptive picture of the interviewees’ and ORGA’s use of alcohol.

The second section of the findings answers my research question. That is, it describes the role of alcohol use in Hatch & Schultz’s (2002) four organisational identification processes, based on the way in which interviewees described its role and purpose for them as members of ORGA. The role or function of alcohol in each identification process, Mirroring, Reflecting, Expressing, and Impressing, is discussed in turn. Hatch & Schultz’s (2002) broad definition of each of these processes...
processes is provided at the beginning of each sub-section to ensure understanding before each process is explored in relation to alcohol use.
Descriptive Findings

ORGA-Hosted Drinking Activities – The Importance of ‘Friday Night Drinks’

‘So, yeah, and the firm provides drinks, it provides a lot of social functions for staff on Fridays, weekends, whatever.’

‘Yeah I try and make the most of it. I mean most the events are free so I go to most of them. Always go to the Friday drinks.’

P10.13 ‘...there’ll be something on here on a Friday night. Like if it’s a team function or a firm function, like once a month here we have firm drinks.’

P12. ‘Most commonly would be say Friday night drinks, and that’d just be with workmates and probably a 5th to a 3rd of the floor would attend that.’

P3. ‘We have Friday night drinks twice a month for [division]. There’s firm-wide drinks on a Friday once a month.’

As illustrated by the above quotes, the ‘Friday night drinks’ were by far the most commonly mentioned ORGA-hosted social function that arose across all the interviews. The firm hosted two forms of ‘Friday drinks’ for employees – weekly / fortnightly (depending on one’s division) Friday night drinks for each division or ‘floor’, and monthly ‘firm-wide’ drinks for all members of the company’s

13 Each ‘participant’ in the study has been labeled with a number, so as to show that quotes are representative of the views of a variety of interviewees. The participant to whom each quote is attributable is listed next to the respective quote (e.g. ‘P2’ is quoted from ‘Participant 2’s’ transcript). In the original information sheet and consent form provided to participants, it was stated that quotes would only be presented in ‘aggregated’ form (e.g. “One participant stated that…”). However, in order to illustrate diversity in the quotes (i.e. that they were not taken from the transcripts of only a few interviewees), quotes have been attributed to the respective participant. Consent was obtained via e-mail from all but three participants to present their quotes in a manner that differed from that outlined in the original information sheet and consent form. Those who did not consent to this change in quote presentation have not had their quotes labelled.
Wellington office. The Friday night drinks seemed to be a very important social occasion for the majority of interviewees, providing a setting in which a number of social processes could be enacted, such as reflecting on work-life, building more personal (as opposed to work-based) relationships with colleagues, and simply having fun (these processes are elaborated on later).

In addition to the Friday-night drinks, the firm also hosted mid-year and end-of-year balls for workers, and a range of other social and leisure functions throughout the year, as described by the interviewees in the following quotes:

P13. ‘Every year we have a Christmas ball, we have a midyear function, which is the whole Wellington firm.’

‘We have like midyear functions. So just within our teams, and then one for [division], and then one for everyone as well. We also have Christmas ones and we have an end of year ball which everyone is invited to and [their] partners. And they have stuff like graduate welcome functions, so like when the graduates start.’

P15. ‘We have a Christmas party for [division]. A ball for the firm. A team Christmas party. And we have the same thing midyear as well. A lot of parties.’

P3. ‘Well I can only speak for the [division] department obviously. We have group dinners, we’ll go out to dinner maybe 3 times a year, including our Christmas function. At department level we’ve got, like at the start of the year when you welcome all the new grads, we’ve got a department wide function. We’ve got a department wide mid-year function. Christmas function. As well as, at the end of the year, we have a welcome the interns, the summer interns. It’s the same thing as the grads, but at the end of the year. And then the firm has um, once a month we’ve got drinks at the end of the month, and that’s all the firm together. Catered, and alcohol obviously. Um firm wide mid-year, and the firm wide Christmas ball. As well as that we’ve got the social club once a month, which is firm wide, doing all sorts of activities. Sports teams, things like that. That’s firm wide.’
Clearly then, senior management at ORGA went to significant lengths to put on an extensive number and variety of social functions for the workers over the course of the year. Everything from Christmas parties and mid-year balls to rock climbing, bowling and kayaking were ‘put on’ by the firm for workers at no charge to the individuals. It would appear that alcohol was used frequently at these events, or post-event (in the case of things such as outdoor activities) to provide a medium by which individuals could ‘stick around’ afterwards and socialize with their colleagues:

P13. ‘I mean what they [ORGA] put on won’t necessarily all be alcohol based. Which I think is the impression I’m giving with the other ones. Although if I think about it a large number of them would involve alcohol.’

The reasons given for the presence of alcohol at these functions was that members of the firm simply ‘expected it to be there’. In this way, there seemed to be a pre-existing association in the minds of the workers between having a social gathering on the one hand and the use of alcohol on the other:

P12. ‘I guess it’s sorta expected when you’re socialising to have a drink or something, and it’s generally a pretty good feeling as well, you can just relax [at ORGA functions]. And it’s fun.’

P7. ‘I can pretty confidently say, if there wasn’t any alcohol, at least Friday drinks, no one would hang around, it wouldn’t be as social.’

P13. ‘Yeah I think there’s an expectation that alcohol will be there. Um. Or at least it would definitely be noticed if it wasn’t. And again that’s probably a, well how is it different to turning up for a meeting?’
Interviewees were also asked about the presence of ‘drunkenness’ at the ORGA-hosted functions. The general view was that at present, there was a ‘responsibility’ or ‘quietness’ to the way workers used alcohol, in terms of deliberately pursuing its psychoactive effects, at ORGA-hosted functions:

P10. ‘Yeah and that was much the same really in that you always had Friday night drinks there [this interviewee had done an internship prior to joining ORGA at another professional services firm]. And it’s not about, nowhere is it about getting slaughtered. The [senior individuals] want you to take an hour at the end of the week to spend that time together as a team, whether you drink a Coke or beer.’

P12. ‘I think it’s relatively responsible, I think it’s no worse than the general public, but I think it’s definitely better than other, like if I go to a rugby club, it’s a lot more responsible than a rugby club or something…I mean you’ve gotta remember you’re at work and you’ve gotta be careful that you don’t lose it. I think that pulls it back to an extent as well, it’s all good to have fun, but you don’t want people to think they couldn’t let you loose at client functions or things like that because you’d get smashed.’

P9. ‘Friday night drinks is always meant to be, “get together for a couple of drinks and then go somewhere else”. So, it’s not ’sposed to be “there’s a load of booze on the meeting room floor guys go and get into it”. It gets there, and then usually one or two things happen: someone does something stupid, or, it’s just got a little bit out of hand and there’ll be a note that goes round to say guys, the idea is, a lot of people go out Friday nights be it for a meal or whatever, to kind of get together, have a drink, go somewhere else and do what you’re doing. It’s not a stay there till 10 o clock and get hammered…So the tone there is it’s ’sposed to just be a social drink. Um, and I think to be honest that’s the tone of most the events that they [ORGA] do, if not all.’

However, the present-day ‘responsibility’ around alcohol use at ORGA-hosted functions was often contrasted to previous times, when workers who had been at the
firm for around four years or more suggested that ‘drunkenness’ at work functions was more prevalent:

P12. ‘And over night I think the amount of drinking has definitely decreased, in my experience here.’

**Ben: What would you say the reason for that is?**

P12. ‘I dunno if it’s a lot less money is poured into functions or that sort of thing, and I don’t know if it’s Recession linked or who were hiring, or whether there’s actually been a direction in tryna reduce drinking or binge drinking or that sort of thing. Definitely when I first started, maybe it’s the number of people we used to hire, I know our hiring numbers have gone down recently as well, and so, you get less of it. But yeah they’d probably be the main reason.’

P5. ‘Umm, it’s [the social side of ORGA] big but I wouldn’t say it’s that large. I think, from what I’ve heard it’s died down in sort of the last sort of 5 years I guess.’

**Ben: Why do you think that might be?**

P5. ‘Just drinking culture, probably money as well, the Recession and stuff. I mean this company is pretty good in the sense, I mean the Recession’s knocked back its growth but it’s still grown, it definitely hasn’t receded. But I think it’s just tightening the belts.’

**Ben: To what extent would you say drunkenness is part of the culture?**

P12. ‘Oh I dunno, not what it used to be. To a minor extent. Nowadays.’
‘I would say some of the events have definitely been toned down. They used to do a grad pub crawl, but they’ve stopped that because it wasn’t seen to be very responsible and stuff.’

Ben: And so in recent years it’s sort of become more controlled?

‘Yeah I think so. From the stories I’ve heard, people used to get out of control, and it’s not really like that anymore.’

P15. ‘I think it’s actually, it’s quietened down a bit over the last couple of years. When I first started, at these sort of events, they were huge, a lot of people just got written off. But last couple of years, it’s less so. And it might be because of, it’s because of the people they’re hiring I think, well at least in [division] anyway. I dunno if that was a conscious decision but there seems to be less party animals that are being hired basically.’

The most common reason given for this ‘toning down’, as evidenced by the above quotes, was the recent economic recession. Interviewees believed that the lack of surplus funds available because of the recession resulted in less alcohol being provided at the functions. This limited workers’ opportunities to consume large quantities at social functions. In addition, interviewees believed that the firm had made conscious efforts to reduce drunkenness at work functions in recent years through modifying the type of people they hired (‘less party animals’ as described in the last quote above) and a general shift in attitude within the company towards drunkenness at work social functions.

Another theme that often came up when discussing the role of alcohol at ORGA-hosted functions was the idea of voluntarity, in terms of both attendance at the functions, and the decision to use alcohol at the functions. Almost all the
interviewees were quick to mention that there was never any pressure from senior individuals or the structure of the function to drink alcohol. The presence of non-alcoholic drinks at social functions was the key means by which individuals highlighted the voluntary nature of one’s decision to drink alcohol at ORGA-hosted functions:

P4. ‘But even month end drinks and stuff, there might only be 50 to 80 people turn up, So yeah, I mean it’s not like everyone’s doing everything. So it gives you a few different options to mingle and socialise in the way that suits you as well’

P4. ‘It’s very open, there’s people here who don’t drink at all. And you know, they go along and orange juice is always available. I mean when we have a drinks, the drinks cupboard consists of wine, beer, cider, Diet Coke, Coke, Sprite, orange juice. It’s definitely “we’re having liquid that we’re consuming”, it’s not a “you have to have alcohol” sorta thing.’

P5. ‘Na it’s definitely just there, there’s a lot of people in this company who don’t drink who are quite religious and stuff. So it’s just there. I have noticed there’s a hell of a lot of non-alcoholic drinks, like Coke and lemonade and stuff, so there is quite a lot of non-alcoholic stuff.’

P6. ‘We’ll have an open bar on, but we’ll stock just as many soft drinks afterwards as beer. You know, a lot of the [senior individuals], a lot of the people who are essentially running the show, or who are at least role models to the rest of the company, they, are drinking lots and lots of Coke and coffee, and juice.’

‘Well yeah to an extent, but you don’t have to drink, and I know people who don’t drink, to do well here and socialise with people and get to know people. It’s not like it limits you if you don’t drink. But it’s more just, I dunno, what you do. The norm.’
Interviewees’ Drinking Activities – ‘An Average Week’

In an attempt to gain a snapshot of the drinking activities of the interviewees, both at work functions and in their own ‘personal time’, all interviewees were asked to describe an ‘average week’ in terms of what days they would drink, how much they would drink on a drinking occasion, who they would drink with, and to explain any differences in their rationale between ‘weekend drinking’ (5pm Friday onwards, Saturday, and Sunday) and ‘weekday drinking’ (all other times of the week). The pattern across almost all of the workers was to deliberately minimise their drinking activities on weekdays and to engage in relatively heavier (in terms of the amount of alcohol consumed) drinking activities on the weekend:

P1. ‘Friday night we usually have work drinks, um, so we stick around after work and have a few beers and go to a few pubs. Friday and Saturday are quite big nights for me, I’m usually out till about 5 or 6 in the morning, um, and Saturday the same.’

P3. ‘Probably average week, have maybe one beer after work kinda thing, well on a Thursday. Friday usually stick around for work drinks, 2 or 3 beers. And Saturday, depending what you do, go out with friends and that would be more.’

‘Average week is probably just one or two during the week, and then, in the weekends probably just Saturday night. And probably have a couple on Friday. Two on Tuesday. Two on Friday. And then a bit of a big night on Saturday.’

P15. ‘So I’d say most weekends, I’d have, either Friday or Saturday night, I’d have a few drinks, probably one night where I’d have sort of a dozen or the equivalent. Yeah most Fridays or Saturdays I’ll have a few drinks and probably one of those nights will be a reasonably big night.’
It seemed then that the drinking activities of the interviewees were compacted into weekend time, with Friday or Saturday often described as a ‘big night’ in terms of how much alcohol would be consumed, or how late one would stay up drinking. The reasons behind this time management certainly appeared to be work-related, with all interviewees not wanting to be inhibited by the effects of a hangover while at work for reasons of reputation, general well-being, and productivity. Indeed this area of discussion in the interviews provided an effective means for uncovering how important the interviewees career prospects were to them, in that they often cited ‘being hung-over’ or unfit for work as a result of alcohol use as being detrimental to their personal / professional reputation and their work output, and thus to their upward progression within ORGA:

‘So what has carried through is still the modus operandi of having Friday night drinks. What has died away is that Monday to Thursday is seen as a no-no. And you see less and less people coming to work on a Monday or a Tuesday who have had a few drinks the night before. I think people are very fearful of losing their jobs because they’re hung-over or whatever, because they don’t operate as efficiently.’

P4. ‘As far as, you know you don’t go out on Wednesday just cause it’s student night and come in hung-over the next day or anything. I guess it’s not only a, personally I think that should be a moral and respect and responsibility thing as a professional, not just an ORGA workplace sorta thing. And I mean I’ve never really seen anything like that happen. There was one instance, where, but I mean it was definitely in a down time when this person didn’t have much work on, um, but I mean that one kinda shocked me, cause it was the first time, and it’s the only time I’ve ever seen someone go out late, and not have much of any sleep and then come in the next day.’

P10. ‘...but there are still people I know that work and don’t really care what state they turn up to work in. I mean, you don’t wanna turn up here in a state the next day. But, I mean, if you do, you’re just harming yourself really. It’s all about if you wanna be seen as someone they [senior management] can trust and do work with a client and that sort of thing, and go up through the ranks and be respected, then you can’t turn up, hung-over, and dishevelled, and unwell and unfocussed.’
...it would be rather embarrassing to be in a state where I was completely unfit for work. And yeah I spose you don’t wanna be that person who comes into work the next day and everyone’s talking about what you did.’

One of the senior individuals I interviewed commented on the change in the timing of workers’ drinking activities over his career in the accounting profession, and cited a heightened lack of ‘tolerance for mistakes’, both within the firm and at a broader societal level, as the reason for this change in behaviour. This certainly seems to align with how the more junior staff felt about their work, in that there was a strong feeling that ORGA ‘expected’ them to deliver top quality work and results. Given that their work was undertaken on weekdays, the use of alcohol was consequently ‘compacted’ into certain pockets of the week (i.e. the weekend) so as to avoid their behaviour or a ‘hangover’ having any effect on the quality of their work, and thus their career prospects:

‘Yeah it [drinking behaviour] has changed, it has changed in so far as, if I go back to the 70s and 80s and 90s, the use of alcohol in the workplace, whether it was in the workplace within work hours or lunch hours or anything, was far more common place than it is today. Now, it is far more, for want of a better expression, ‘binge orientated’. It’s more on sort of a Wednesday night or a Friday night or a weekend.

You know you go back to the 70s and 80s, and I’ve only ever worked in pre-dominantly white collar industries, you know banking, share broking, merchant banking, accounting etc etc...But having a drink at lunchtime, back in the 70s and 80s, was very very common place. You know you would go down to the pub, with your workmates, and have a pie, or a plate of curried sausages, and have a couple of pints of beer, and then you’d go back to work. That was quite common place, especially in the banking and share broking industries. Nowadays, that just wouldn’t be tolerated, unless you know, you’re at the higher level of the workplace and you’re entertaining clients, and even less so now then what it used to be. So what tends to happen now is people build up for the Friday night.’
However, aside from the actual work output itself, it is made quite clear in some of the above quotes that the workers were not as concerned about the impact of alcohol use on their actual work output, but more about the impact of alcohol use on their personal and professional image. In particular, how they were viewed by management and senior individuals was an important consideration in managing one’s alcohol intake. In this way, being ‘seen’ as doing ‘bad’ work seemed to be as much of an issue for interviewees as actually producing a ‘bad’ piece of work.

In terms of quantity of alcohol consumed, interviewees were often vague in their descriptions, perhaps in order to shield themselves from any moral judgements they thought I would make, and also probably for the simple fact that they were not comfortable giving away this kind of information to a stranger. ‘One or two’, or ‘a few’ were generally the preferred terms for interviewees when describing their alcohol intake on any given drinking occasion.

In one particular interview, the effectiveness of this ambiguity was highlighted to me quite explicitly. When I asked an interviewee to elaborate on what he meant by ‘a few’ drinks on a Saturday night, he stated that he would normally have ‘about a dozen’ beers – a surprising clarification! Thus, given the highly subjective nature of the terms employed by the interviewees, it is very difficult to ascertain with any real certainty the actual alcohol intake of interviewees over the course of ‘an average week’.
However, there was certainly a conscious effort made to distinguish between what interviewees saw as relatively low or high amounts of alcohol consumption. Terms such as a ‘few’ or ‘one or two’ were the most common phrases, and seemed to represent a modest drinking session (in terms of alcohol intake) or a ‘quiet night’ for interviewees. On the other hand, the term ‘big night’ was the most frequently used term to describe a heavy drinking session. Interviewees’ seemed quite deliberate with their use and interchange of these terms, so as to signal to me what the ‘tone’ or intensity of their drinking would be at any given drinking session. The more junior staff also seemed to have ‘big nights’ much more often than the senior individuals, for whom a ‘big night’ was a rarity. The reasons cited for this difference were generally that junior staff had no familial responsibilities to constrain them, and also that the ‘older’ individuals found it harder to physically cope with the adverse health effects of a ‘big night’.

While the above terms used to describe alcohol intake are quite vague and are obviously subjective in nature, the aim of the current study was not to ascertain precise measures of workers alcohol intake, but instead to understand the reasons for interviewees alcohol use in the first instance. With that said, from a purely anecdotal standpoint, it seemed to me that the interviewees’ alcohol intake certainly conformed to my own expectations given their respective stages of life. Only one of the interviewees, a senior individual at ORGA, did not drink at all. In contrast, one of the interviewees who had been at the firm for about a year, did express to me how he had recently tried to cut down on his drinking as a result of other workers noticing the impact of his drinking activities on his punctuality:
P1. ‘It was probably the fact that for 6 to 8 weeks in a row, I was showing up late to work on a Thursday. Um, the quality of my work was suffering, people were starting to notice, and, I found that probably I had to make a decision on where my priorities were. And, I knew that if I kept doing it, it would hamper my career. And, I think, it was something that I needed to make a decision on very very quickly. I had a discussion with some of the people at work and they were saying, “well, it’s understandable at your age, you’re wanting to do this, it’s OK if you show up to work hung-over every once in a while, but if you’re doing it consistently, people are actually starting to notice now, and, something is gonna happen and you have to make a choice”. So they were very supportive of the decisions I was making. They were still very positive about where I was going, and they just thought I needed to start cutting down.’

This quote very effectively illustrates first-hand the problems workers faced if they drank too much during the week; ‘quality of…work suffering’ and ‘people starting to notice’. It is clear here that both the interviewee’s productivity and his personal reputation, at least in his own eyes, were beginning to be adversely affected by his alcohol use during the week, and given the importance he had attributed to his career prospects, it is evident at the end of the quote that he had began taking measures to protect his career prospects from any further damage caused by alcohol use. This interviewee however was the only one who described a problematic degree of alcohol use (or perhaps was the only one who was totally honest about it), with the rest of the interviewees seeming to drink at a level that did not in their view affect their career.

The people that interviewees chose to drink with was also an interesting point of discussion in the interviews. Clearly, employees would be drinking with their work colleagues at ORGA functions (particularly Friday night drinks), as these were solely for employees of the company (aside from the big functions at which partners of employees were allowed). However, it seemed that the majority of employees tended
to drink with people ‘outside of work’ on the weekends. For some though, they had developed quite strong friendships with their work colleagues, and as a result these individuals played both the role of colleague and friend, and could thus be a drinking partner both at ORGA functions and on the weekends or ‘outside of work’:

P9. ‘And at times I just wanna go and have a drink with my mates, not people at work. And that’s usually me if I’ve had a rough week or few weeks. I’ve worked with my team, as good as it’s been with them and I’ve been with them the weekend cause we have to get a report done, when it gets to Friday night, I don’t wanna go out with those people. I actually wanna go out with my mates and have a beer.’

The quote above is quite representative of the attitudes of many of the other interviewees. After spending such a large amount of time with work colleagues during the week, it seemed that interviewees grew tired of their company and thus valued the prospect of interacting with people ‘outside of work’. In addition, this attitude is perhaps evidence of the strength of the bonds between ‘work mates’ / and ‘friends’. While some interviewees had developed friendships with workmates, the majority seemed to make an explicit distinction between their friends and their work colleagues. In the above quote for example, a distinction between ‘the team’ and ‘mates’ is made quite clear – the implication being that the two groups are distinct from one another in the minds of the interviewee.
The Role of Alcohol Use in Organisational Identification Processes

Having provided a thorough picture of the nature of the interviewees’ drinking activities and the drinking activities hosted by ORGA, I now turn to address my overarching research question:

‘What is the role of alcohol use in the four processes of organisational identification described by Hatch & Schultz (2002)?’

The role of alcohol use in each of the four identification processes will be discussed. Following this, the separate discussions of the four processes will be synthesised in the Discussion section to extricate the theoretical insights that arise.

Process 1 – Mirroring

‘On the basis of their study Dutton and Dukerich (1991) claimed that the opinions and reactions of others affect identity through mirroring and further suggested that mirroring operates to motivate organizational members to get involved in issues that have the power to [affect] public opinion of their organization.’

(Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 123)

Based on the analysis, it would seem that the interviewees’ alcohol use did not play any significant role in the Mirroring process, or processes related to Mirroring. Given that the Mirroring process is one that primarily involves individuals outside of an organisation this is somewhat understandable. Perhaps the only way that alcohol
use could be considered as part of the Mirroring process was in interviewees experiences with other people’s perceptions of ORGA (e.g. an ‘outsider’ pointing out a certain aspect of ORGA’s image to an employee ‘over a drink’). However, this relationship between Mirroring and alcohol use did not arise in any significant way during interviews, so it cannot be claimed as a finding with any great degree of conviction.

Process 2 – Reflecting

‘We claim that once organizational images are mirrored in identity they will be interpreted in relation to existing organizational self-definitions that are embedded in cultural understanding. When this happens, identity is reinforced or changed through the process of reflecting on identity in relation to deep cultural values and assumptions that are activated by the reflection process.’

(Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 124)

Reflecting on work life and ORGA

It was clear from the interview data that one way in which the drinking act related to the interviewees’ work life was that it provided a means for reflecting on the nature of ORGA, its people, its systems and structures, and the work that employees were currently involved in. The group-based or social nature of the drinking act, at least those that were not hosted by ORGA (ORGA-hosted functions are discussed later in this section), provided an appropriate forum for airing one’s thoughts about these issues, with interviewees perceiving the social drinking act as a form of psychological release that allowed them to ‘get issues off their chest’ through conversation. In addition, the spaces in which the drinking act was conducted (often
off-work sites such as bars) were also conducive to these types of discussions between workers given the sense of informality the interviewees associated with them. The fact that, bars for example, were often entirely removed from other ORGA members also resulted in a degree of privacy to the conversations, even though these are ironically, generally considered to be fairly ‘public’ spaces (Sturdy, Schwarz & Spicer, 2006).

The drinking act combined with the informal and private locations (in the eyes of interviewees) in which they were conducted thus provided an appropriate setting in which colleagues could have honest and open conversations about ORGA and their general work-life:

P1. ‘Yeah the type of work we do [consulting] is um, some of the work we do is quite...sensitive. People don’t usually like seeing us, if they see us there, they know that something’s happening, and there’s something wrong. At other times, people like having us there, um, some of the jobs we’re doing um, involve restructuring, so people losing their jobs. So um, it hasn’t been, some of the work hasn’t been that pleasant. So it’s good to go out and have a drink and be able to talk about that with people who actually are going through the same sort of thing. Um, I think within, well within the um, within Wellington, or within most businesses, consultants...aren’t really looked kindly upon. I think, some of the comments are we’re second worst to lawyers, or they think we’re overpaid and don’t really do much. We go in and we talk a whole of crap. But um, yeah so, so there is that perception out there, that we’re not kind of, not the “bees knees”’

Ben to P13: And where would you guys most likely have that sort of conversation about the company?

P13. ‘Over a drink. In a bar, over a drink.’
Ben: Would it tend to be more in the informal settings?

P13. ‘Yeah absolutely. Yeah you’re probably unlikely to find a series of e-mails floating around in anyone’s inbox about that sort of thing. Definitely in an informal setting...But yeah an actual conversation is more likely to happen over a glass of wine.’

What is clear from these quotes is that the drinking act provided an activity through which fairly significant aspects of ORGA’s identity could be questioned or challenged by its workers, with no fear of any of their comments impacting on their career prospects or progression in the firm. What is apparent here, is that there was a degree of implied privacy to any discussions held ‘over a drink’ amongst colleagues. Along with the social act came a new set of norms or implied rules that participants in the act both seemed to tacitly consent to upon entering the social engagement.

In terms of the Reflection process, in the first quote above, the interviewee speaks of the criticisms of high fees and lack of value faced by him and his team as consultants at ORGA. These are direct threats to the firm’s sense of identity, or at least that of its consulting division, which are discussed and to some extent ‘worked out’ at a group level through the drinking act itself.

This is perhaps one explanation for the large number of social functions that ORGA hosted for its workers. Given the more informal nature\(^{14}\) of these work hosted social events, it is likely that senior management at ORGA realised the opportunities these kind of situations provided for workers to communally and informally raise the less

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\(^{14}\) At least relative to the formality interviewees associated with the regular 8am to 5pm ‘work hours’. 

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‘visible’ (to senior management) issues or problems at ORGA, such as those faced by the interviewee in the above quotes. At the very least, these issues that would ordinarily be encountered in the ‘frontline’ of the organisation could be brought to management’s attention at ORGA functions, or at least to the attention of those who report to management. Through awareness of these issues, management would be in a better position than they otherwise would be to address these issues, and thus be better placed to improve ORGA’s image and subsequent performance (at least that seemed to be the idea).

However, given that ORGA-hosted functions were still seen by interviewees as ‘work’ to some extent, the possibilities for the same degree of openness and honesty (in terms of discussions about ORGA) that interviewees attributed to the non-work hosted drinking acts were still fairly limited. The idea of Friday night drinks and other ORGA hosted functions as ‘informal-but-not-too-informal’ events was most evident in the way employees would talk about intoxication at work functions. Because of the sense of ORGA functions as a ‘part of work’, workers would often describe a deliberate degree of self-management of the inevitable bi-product of extended drinking acts at these work-hosted functions - the physiological effect of the alcohol. This made any prolonged reflections on the company at ORGA-hosted functions a somewhat risky endeavour, and it was in the attendees’ interests career-wise to be careful of how much they drank at ‘work functions’. If, as a result of having ‘too much to drink’, one was to divulge too much information to senior individuals, or to express the information in a less palatable (for the senior individual) fashion, or to simply ‘make an idiot of themselves’ by behaving inappropriately,
interviewees perceived that their personal and professional image in the eyes of their superiors could be compromised:

P5. ‘Yeah it’s definitely that, you wanna have a good time but you wanna make sure you don’t make an idiot of yourself.’

P7. ‘I wouldn’t say I’ve ever been drunk around workmates, only on those occasions where it’s outside of [ORGA-hosted functions]. That’s probably just something for my own career, smart move is not to get real drunk at a work function. Just because, I guess it’s a risk you could do something stupid. I mean I don’t think it’s particularly frowned upon but...’

One interviewee outlined her experience with being too open with one of her superiors as a result of the physiological effect of the alcohol. Rather than only outlining the work issues she was concerned about to one of her superiors, her more affective or personal reflections on the work issues were given the opportunity to ‘cross over’ into the work setting, as she also stated she was thinking of leaving the firm:

‘...well I mean when you’re being thought of for a promotion you don’t want a [senior individual] to be like, well, ‘last month you said this and you weren’t happy, not gonna promote you if you think you’re gonna leave like you said at drinks last week”. Like you don’t want anything to cross over into your work life. And I’m probably more cautious of it cause I’ve actually done that! I’ve actually had too many [drinks] and told [one of her superiors] I wasn’t that happy, and here’s the reasons why and, it’s just not worth the anxiety the next day.’

Ben: And how did that kinda work out?
‘Well, um, it kinda was actually forgotten about. But I know it’s in the back of his or her head. Yeah. So nothing really happened, but I dunno, might do when promotion comes around I’m not sure. I think I was just tryna outline the issues we had as a team but I think they weren’t really ironed out because I guess management and stuff were too busy to look at the problems. That’s probably a frustration that contributes to drinking as well, by the end of the week not being able to talk about things and get things resolved.’

In conclusion, it would seem that the drinking act certainly played a role in the activities that make up the broader process of Reflecting on organisational issues and overall identity at ORGA. In particular, the drinking act provided a key means through which interviewees were able to evaluate the company and their own work life with their colleagues. In this sense, alcohol use served a functional role as a form of release and psychological resolution and repair. Through the more informal discussions ‘over a drink’, ORGA members were able to reflect on the nature of the work, the company, and their colleagues and clients. The Reflection processes that workers undertook ‘over a drink’ was clearly identified by ORGA’s management as providing a useful means of uncovering valuable information about organisational life from those ‘on the frontline’ of the work. As a result, ORGA deliberately hosted drinking events, assumedly in an effort to facilitate processes of Reflection and gather this valuable information for purposes of improving organisational performance.

However, given the relatively small amount of interview data that was coded under the ‘Reflecting’ theme, the role of the alcohol use in the Reflecting process seemed to be minor compared to the role of alcohol use in the processes of Expressing and Impressing organisational identity, which are discussed next.
Process 3 – Expressing

‘One way an organization makes itself known is by incorporating its organizational reflections in its outgoing discourse, that is, the identity claims referred to above allow organizational members to speak about themselves as an organization to themselves…cultural self-expression includes any and all references to collective identity (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Jenkins, 1996).’

The identification process of Expressing organisational identity was certainly one of the main ways in which alcohol was used by both individuals and senior management at ORGA. Alcohol appeared to be used in the following four sub-activities; celebrating / rewarding work-related success, building intra-firm relationships, managerial control, and induction of the graduate workers at the beginning of each year into the firm. Through these processes and the use of alcohol, ORGA’s identity was Expressed, changed and / or reinforced by its members. The role of alcohol use in each of these expressive activities is discussed in turn.

Celebrating / rewarding work-related success

Interviewees often spoke about ORGA-hosted social functions as a form of celebration, where their efforts and hard work were rewarded by senior management:

P3. ‘Yeah definitely. If you’ve been working on a big job then the firm, like client team, would go out for a celebratory drink or whatever.’

P4. ‘I mean even if we have a work drinks celebration or something, for example last week we won a contract that we were extremely stoked about, it was a large client. So [management] put on drinks on a Wednesday afternoon.’
'I think that’s the only one actually, or maybe it’s kinda used as a reward here. For the long hours, and the highly stressful work you do. It’s a little way they can reward you after a hard week.'

P10. ‘I think ORGA is quite generous with how many events and stuff they put on, but I don’t think that’s to try make people drink more. I think its more putting money into saying thanks, have a drink, have a good time sort of thing. Like it’s not tryna make a drinking culture, they’re just more generous with what they give back to staff then other firms.’

Two things are clear from the above quotes. One is that the workers saw their superiors and ORGA as a whole as expecting a lot of them in terms of the effort they put into their work. Indeed the expectation of quality in all aspects of their work was something that interviewees reiterated time and time again in the interviews, with quite a few interviewees admitting they would often work unpaid overtime, including weekends, if a particular project required it. The second insight to be drawn from the above set of quotes is that as much as management at ORGA expected a lot of their workers, they rewarded employees accordingly when they produced the required standard of work:

P1. ‘Like I said at the start, the work is filled with very intelligent, very talented, very ambitious people. Um, otherwise they wouldn’t be here...But yeah, it’s something that you do notice. But the social side of things is also just as important...Like I said, people wanna work hard but they also wanna have fun while they’re doing it. As long as you can find that balance, then it’s good.’

P4. ‘So I mean other than that, as much as there’s kinda a work hard play hard, it’s more of a, make it available to socialise, rather than, I don’t say play hard in the sense of drink hard.’
In this respect, employees as a collective were conditioned to expect rewards (in the form of celebrations) that were proportionate to the amount of effort they put into their work. The more work that they did, the bigger and/or more frequent the celebrations. What is interesting is that none of this extra effort, at least for those at the junior levels, was rewarded directly through extra pay. Interviewees often seemed to view ‘going beyond the call of duty’ as having long term benefits for them in the form of promotion and secondment to other countries. As a result, it seemed that the ORGA-hosted functions provided management with a way of rewarding workers in place of what would be, given the amount of extra hours junior staff worked, expensive overtime pay to workers:

P5. ‘Probably. It’s quite competitive. It’s quite driven, like a lot of people are here because they wanna make the top, there’s a lot of monetary gains as well if you can get to the top. So I guess people don’t wanna risk that. And also because it’s an international firm, if you wanna transfer overseas, if you’ve got a good reputation in terms of your name and your work and stuff.’

‘Well you know by offering fun events and social activities and opportunities for a drink, yeah I’d say so. Cause they probably think we view that as part of our remuneration package as well.’

As described previously, the actual celebrations hosted by ORGA could involve alcohol or be alcohol free, but the impression from the interviewees was that all of the significant celebratory functions, such as the mid-year and Christmas balls, or team-level celebratory drinks, did involve alcohol use. In the case of these large scale celebrations, it seemed that they were one of the rarer work functions where employees would actually drink relatively heavily, in contrast to the Friday night
drinks, where as described previously, interviewees would deliberately exert a degree of self-control over their alcohol intake:

P9. ‘I think rightly or wrongly, if you're going to have a celebration, if you're going to have a thank you, which is what the function kind of is, “hey guys you’ve worked really hard, thanks, let’s have a party”, there’s just an assumption that there will be alcohol involved. To the individuals’ degree they want it to be. I’ve gone to Christmas functions and got absolutely hammered, not the best thing to do, and, I’ve gone and had a couple of beers and driven us all home. But being able to be in that context, you know where people probably loosen up a bit and stuff, I actually think it’s [having a drink] a key element of that night.’

What is evident from the above discussion then is that alcohol use formed an important part of the celebrations at ORGA. In this sense, the prospect of alcohol use and a large scale, shared drinking act could be seen as a means of reinforcing ‘appropriate’ or ‘desirable’ behaviour from a managerial standpoint, and thus, to some extent, shaping the overall identity of the workers and the firm as a whole. Through the use of alcohol or alcohol-based functions as a form of reward, ORGA’s management could successfully signal to their workers what kinds of work behaviour would result in a desirable outcome (i.e. the alcohol-based functions), namely work behaviours that resulted in financial success for the company, or that produced a high quality of work for a client.

**Building intra-firm relationships**

A major theme that emerged from the interview discussions was the role of alcohol use in ‘socialising’ and building relationships with work colleagues. The drinking act
provided a means by which workers could talk to one another outside the usual parameters of ‘work hours’, and thus get to know colleagues ‘as a person’ rather than as a ‘work colleague’. The fact that the drinking act was a shared activity seemed to play an important role in this relationship building. By engaging in the activity together, colleagues had, at the very least, some ‘common ground’ (the drinking act) from which discussions could begin.

P3. ‘Um...well I mean end of month drinks usually revolve around...drinks. I guess, it’s a tool to socialise I guess. And it is used a lot. Even with the social club, there’ll be drinks and food. I guess the only thing that isn’t out of the things I listed is sports teams. But apart from that, it’s [alcohol] probably gonna be there. But it’s not like everyone is gonna abuse it and drink free alcohol until it’s gone. It’s just, everyone enjoys having a few beers after work. Socialising.’

P13. ‘I think it’s [Friday night drinks] less about people ending the week and wanting to get smashed, and it’s more that relationship aspect to it. That collegial environment, rather than wanting to forget your woes of the week.’

P4. ‘It’s kinda just more of a, I guess here at ORGA they try and get everyone involved on a social level with each as well cause I guess it makes the working environment, you know easier if you get along with each other socially. It makes that aspect of it a lot easier, you know getting to know everyone, you know working together and unwinding together sort of thing.’

P12. ‘I think it’s the social functions, and just having those it what sort of creates those relationships. Particularly in [division] we have quite a few just [division]-specific ones. So you’re not just lost in a big sea of people, you’re with the people you work with and you get to know them a bit better.’

In addition, the physiological effect of the alcohol was at times seen as an effective means of ‘loosening’ up, or feeling uninhibited by traditional social parameters. For
some, this made it easier to engage in conversation with unfamiliar work colleagues in an effort to ‘get to know them’ better:

P12. ‘You know it relaxes everyone, people have a good time, and I just find when you have a decent night with someone, it brings down any of those barriers. Like when you see them again, you know you’re both human, you’ve both got something in common.’

P15. ‘I think it’s a pretty big part of the culture. It’s encouraged, but it’s not mandatory by any means. I think it’s encouraged because, if you have some drinks, whether it’s drinks with [senior individuals] or drinks with clients, the view is, whether right or wrong, is that you’ll be able to loosen up, and be able to talk to people, and be able to build those relationships. And for some people, they don’t need that. And they’re fine talking to people without the help of alcohol. But I think for a lot of people it helps, and I’m probably one of them.’

It was also interesting here how, when prompted, it became quite clear that for many of the interviewees, the alcohol itself was an important ‘social punctuation mark’ that served to demarcate ‘formal’ work occasions from the more ‘informal’ ones. Interviewees associated the idea of alcohol with informality, openness, and being able to be a bit more ‘relaxed’ around their work colleagues then they otherwise would be:

Ben: I think it is, I think alcohol is more of a marker of informality..

P13. ‘I think that’s quite insightful to be honest, I think that’s a really good way to think about it. In that it wouldn’t be ok to be honest to sort of sit at your desk on a Thursday and say ‘oh I’ll have a quiet wine now’, whereas once there are crisps and there’s alcohol, it’s kinda like, well you can kinda stop working now and it’s ok to chill out…I think it comes back again to what you were saying earlier, it’s that
demarcation between it being almost a compulsory fun activity, and something that’s actually...genuine’

**Ben:** Do you think because the firm puts it on, do you think that makes a difference for people? Because it’s kind of downtime that’s legitimised by the workplace?

P9. ‘Yeah I think that’s a good way to think about it. It’s sign, a good signal, of it’s the end of the week. It’s not Monday night, Tuesday night, Wednesday night, or Thursday night - it’s Friday night. You know, the weekend is here, stop, kinda shutting down.’

The ORGA-hosted Friday night drinks were a particularly interesting case in this respect. Interviewees quite often mentioned that because the company was hosting the event, it was often perceived by ORGA members as more ‘acceptable’ to relax at these times than it would be if one was going to a non-work related leisure event. In this sense, the fact that the alcohol use and the ‘downtime’ was to some extent ‘legitimised’ by the company was perhaps one reason why employees saw it as such a key social part of their week – they felt as though they were ‘allowed’ to relax and finish work for Friday night drinks, which was not generally the case at other times of the week given the ambiguous nature of their work. The Friday night drinks were a clear and explicit symbol to workers from their superiors that the working week had finished and ‘it was ok’ to set aside their work and relax:

**Ben:** Do you think it’s the alcohol itself or the fact that the drinking provides an excuse to stop doing work?
‘Yeah probably that as well. It’s an excuse to stop. Cause it’s an acceptable excuse’

**Ben:** It’s legitimised by the workplace?

‘Yeah! Exactly. *And people seem to accept that you know, ‘I can’t do this now, I’m going upstairs’ [to Friday drinks], people seem to accept that excuse. But if you said ‘I can’t do this now I’m going home’, they probably wouldn’t accept it as much.’

Though not alcohol-related, a similar reflection on the ‘work-hosted’ nature of an event was expressed by the same interviewee:

‘Yeah it is funny. It’s also too, we had [work-hosted leisure event] on a Tuesday night and they started at 5.30, so when I used to do them I’d be like ‘No I can’t [complete a task] I’m going on the [leisure event]’ and the [senior individual] would be like ‘Oh yup that’s fine’. But if it was the gym, they’d be like ‘Oh do you have a class now?’ But because it was a firm thing they were like ‘Oh you must go, quick don’t be late!’. But when it’s the gym – ‘Isn’t there another class you can go to in an hour?’. So it’s quite good having these firm induced events, gives you a bit of a break.’

Interviewees saw ‘socialising over a drink’ as having positive outcomes for their work life. Not only did a more ‘personal’ relationship with work colleagues make for a more relaxed and enjoyable work environment, but it also gave them a broader intra-firm network of people on which they could call when a particular project required expertise outside their own skill set:

**P7.** ‘I think like, the reason I would for example work on the weekends, is because I’ve like, come to know some of my peers quite well, so that like, if they’re under a
bit of strain or whatever, I’ll help them out by working on the weekend on a project. So by that, because, if they didn’t have these Friday drinks or whatever, I’d hardly know a person. And so if that person came up to me and asked me to work on the weekend when I hardly knew ‘em...

Ben: Yeah it’d be like “ok..”. You don’t have that personal connection?

P7. ‘Yeah yeah, that’s right. So having that relationship means I’m more willing to help them out.’

In addition, the work-hosted functions were seen by more junior staff as an effective means for getting to know more senior individuals at the firm, who were ultimately the ones responsible for the junior members’ progression within ORGA and who could be a very valuable source of information in terms of completing a piece of work:

P7. ‘Yeah it’s pretty much a good mix throughout, like quite a lot of the [senior individuals] would hang around, so yeah, through all levels. And it’s quite good, cause that’s the time when you actually get to talk to those people [senior individuals], on a social, non-work related conversation. Because you wouldn’t have a minute of their time otherwise.’

P4. ‘I think, especially when you first start here, it can be a lot less intimidating getting to know people at a social function. And also you’re getting to know them as a person first and you know...you’re a person not a grade. Like when you first start, you kinda have to refer to the chart every time to see who’s [in charge], so you kinda just, I mean when I first started there was one person where I kinda just clicked and she helped me out with a few things. Found out a few weeks later that she was a [senior individual] or something, I was like these are questions I should be asking someone who’s closer to my level, because I was using all her important time. But there’s kinda this openness, and, approachability around the office. I think when you start, it [social functions] just makes those relationships easier to build.’
In terms of work-hosted functions, it was likely that this ‘social’ aspect of alcohol use was an important reason why ORGA’s management chose to host Friday night and firm-wide drinks. By providing a more informal setting in which individuals could get to know each other outside of the more formal ‘work’ situation, it was perhaps hoped that employees would form more ‘personal’ relationships, that would make for a greater degree of collaboration during work hours, and thus, a higher quality of work being produced by workers and their teams. When interviewees were asked why they thought alcohol was so frequently a part of ORGA-hosted functions, the same reasons were described more-or-less every time – the idea that alcohol was simply ‘expected’ by workers, that it was ‘just the way it was’ (i.e. if one is socialising, it would be ‘over a drink’), the ‘norm’, or ‘just a part of New Zealand culture’.

**Induction to the firm**

Alcohol and drinking occasions also seemed to be a key way in which new ‘graduates’ were inducted into the company. Alcohol appeared to be used in a very similar way here as it was to build relationships amongst seasoned employees at ORGA. A senior individual who had frequently been responsible for inducting new graduates into the firm reflected on the effectiveness of alcohol in making ‘grads’ feel more comfortable with one another:

*P9. ‘My view is that alcohol can often break down barriers...the classic is when our graduates come together but don’t know each other from Adam, they’re all obviously pretty nervous. I’ve always found a good way is to relatively quickly get that group in a bar, and get them talking, so using alcohol or the social environment as a
catalyst to do that. Usually works. So, you’ve always gotta be conscious of people that don’t drink cause you’ll marginalise them, or don’t want a drink, so you don’t frame it so it’s around a drink. But you know, we’re out the office we’re in a pub...and I’ve always found that it gets people at a ‘knowing each other’ level quicker generally than if you do just do that professional training at the end of the two weeks. You know, they’ve gone out, they’ve done something a bit off the wall, or they’ve done something they’d go and do with their mates, they’ve now done it with their colleagues, and they’ve got to know each other a bit better. And we all people open up a bit more, um, and as long as nothing gets silly, I’ve always found that as a really good way, you’ll notice the difference. The first night out I’ll notice the difference in the group, not just cause they’re all tired and knackered, but the next day, the interactions around the room. Always noticed that.’

This was a position that was reiterated by one of the other interviewees as well:

P10. ‘Especially with graduates I think cause they come in so sure of how the whole situation’s gonna be, and how to act and you know, people generally behave when they’re in the office. And I don’t think it’s until you get out of the office and people have had a couple of drinks that you actually start to joke around and have a bit of fun and feel more comfortable. And I’m not saying just in that situation, but the difference between the team with new grads, and the team with new grads once you’ve had one function together is quite noticeable in terms of their interaction, and how relaxed they are within the team. I guess after a few drinks, it kinda puts people on the same level.’

Again, the notion of alcohol use as an effective means of building intra-firm relationships is reiterated here. This time however, alcohol is used in the context of integrating entirely new workers into the company. Both the shared drinking act and the physiological effect of the alcohol appear to play a part in this process of making graduates feel more comfortable with one another, and with existing members of the firm upon beginning work at ORGA.
Managerial control

To conclude this section of the findings, it is clear that each of the ‘benefits’ of alcohol use employees described was invariably of benefit for ORGA as a profit-oriented company as well. For example, the idea of alcohol use as an effective means of building stronger relationships with colleagues would be of benefit in terms of the quality of work produced for ORGA’s clients. In this way, it is quite clear that the social events of which alcohol was an important part, was to some extent, a deliberate form of managerial control that served to reinforce certain aspects of ORGA’s organisational identity.

Through positive reinforcement using events involving alcohol, which the workers themselves seemed to enjoy prior to becoming a member of ORGA, ORGA seemed to be successful in getting workers to ‘work harder’ during ordinary work time. This could be for a number of reasons; because they felt an obligation to their ‘team mates’ (with such team bonds being strengthened through work-hosted drinking events), because they felt an obligation to ORGA for ‘buying the drinks’, because they knew they would be rewarded for their efforts, and so forth. Quite a few interviewees saw the numerous events that ORGA hosted for workers as exactly this kind of managerial tactic. The deliberateness of this tactic was clearly evident in a quote from one of the more senior individuals at the firm:

‘You know people here do get worked hard, you know. It’s, there’s an underlying, almost an anonymous HR strategy that, “ah, we will employ a lot of young people, we will work them really really hard, for 3 to 4 years, 5 years. But we will work them bloody hard. And, as a consequence of that, if we have to fill them up with a bit of grog, so they think we’re good people, then we’ll do that”. You know, the
turnover of young people in a firm like ORGA is considerably higher than the turnover of young people in a lot of other industries. You go to university, you start as a graduate when you’re 22, 23, work for 3 or 4 years, you do your professional exams, and when your 27, you might be senior associate, you might be verging on becoming a manager, but you’ve worked really hard over that period of time. People piss off overseas and say “this is all just too much for me”. But during that period we say “well we’ll give them a good time”.

Aside from being one of the most poignant quotes of all the interviews, the text in bold is of most interest. The deliberate managerial attempt to cultivate in the minds of the workers the idea of the company, or those within ORGA as ‘good people’, perfectly explains management’s rationale behind the use of drinking events at ORGA. For the interviewees, drinking seemed to be an activity that they undertook only with those that they were, or wished to be close to on a personal level. By not only drinking ‘with ORGA’ (in the form of work colleagues), but having ORGA ‘buy the drinks’, behaviours that would often be associated with a ‘good mate’ or friend, it seemed as though ORGA was attempting to personify the organisation. It seemed that ORGA’s management wanted workers to feel a sense of friendship or reciprocity towards the organisation, and thus undertake more ‘spontaneous sociability’ (Fukuyama, 1995), described by Kramer (2003) as ‘ the myriad forms of cooperative, altruistic, and extra-role behavior that members of a social community engage in that enhance their collective well-being and further attainment of jointly valued goals’ (p. 343).

In addition, the creation of stronger team bonds through ORGA-hosted functions seemed to be an attempt to cultivate a form of ‘concertive control’ (Barker, 1993) amongst workers. By providing opportunities for workers to get to know one another
‘as a person’, ORGA management hoped that workers would then behave ‘as people’ would to one another, rather than ‘as workers’. This in turn meant that workers would go to greater lengths for one another ‘at work’, and ultimately produce a higher quality of work for the company.

The key point that emerges from the above points then is that social functions seemed to be used deliberately by ORGA management for strategic reasons. By providing workers with opportunities to socialise and strengthen bonds between one another, ORGA was able to generate value for the company, in the form of a ‘stronger team’ and a sense of reciprocity from the workers. Alcohol served as the attractor in these cases, serving to improve attendance at the functions, as well as making processes of socialisation ‘smoother’, both in terms of the sense of informality workers attributed to the use of alcohol, and at times, because of the physiological effect of alcohol itself.

**Process 4 - Impress**

‘In their work on corporate reputations, Rindova and Fombrun (1998) proposed that organizations project images to stakeholders and institutional intermediaries, such as business analysts and members of the press. In its most deliberate form identity is projected to others, for example, by broadcasting corporate advertising, holding press conferences, providing information to business analysts, creating and using logos, building corporate facilities, or dressing in the corporate style.’


Alcohol use was equally as present in processes of Impressing ORGA’s identity upon outsiders as it was in the Expressing process. The two key themes that emerged
from the interview data in respect of the Impressing process were 1) the role of alcohol use in ‘entertaining’ existing clients and 2) the role of alcohol use in networking with potential clients.

Entertaining existing clients

The role of alcohol in ‘entertaining’ clients was one of the major themes that emerged from the interview data. Maintaining relationships with existing clients was seen by interviewees as critical to ORGA’s performance. It was supposedly very important to ensure that relationships with existing clients were maintained and developed in order to ensure repeat business from that client, and, in order to cross-sell other types of services that ORGA offered so as to boost the revenue being obtained from a single client. Given that senior individuals normally had the most interaction with clients themselves, the junior staff I interviewed found it somewhat difficult to comment on the specific nature of ‘client entertainment’, but were quick to highlight that they saw ‘securing business’ in this way as one of the key responsibilities of the senior individuals at the firm:

P3. ‘Not at my level. But definitely up higher up. The more senior staff would go out with them [clients].’

‘Um I don’t personally, but our [superiors] do. But we’re going to [entertainment venue] in about 2 weeks and that’s just purely for our team and clients, so that’s like a big lunch and wine tasting. I think its sorta how to get business as well, give them a drink, or if they get to come to [entertainment venue] you’re gonna get future business from them.’
P10. ‘I dunno I mean we have a lot of people on government working groups and try and get in the media wherever we can giving advice and that sort of thing. But I don’t think, we don’t do massive marketing campaigns.’

P4. ‘Well I mean part of the brand is obviously building relationships with our clients. I mean you know, when you’ve got competition, such as [other firms], I mean the first thing that people know ORGA for is the people they have relationships with. So it’s kinda just like any networking sort of thing. So I mean as part of the brand we like to build those relationships and stuff.’

As outlined in the above quotes, the forms of ‘entertainment’ that were used to get on side with existing clients included lunches, meetings over coffees, client functions, and very occasionally dinners. In addition, the firm also hosted more ‘functional’ forms of client ‘entertainment’ that provided an additional opportunity to meet and interact with existing clients, such as training seminars or presentations:

‘…cause we’ve got a little client listing now, so [senior individuals], well PAs are supposed to do it, but look at it and say, “I dunno Joe Bloggs, we took him out for lunch and a drink three weeks ago, think we’re about due to do it again if we haven’t received work from them for a while”. You’re supposed to take them out for lunch, catch up, see what’s going on, with new work etc etc.’

‘…we try and do training sessions…we invite clients to training, just another opportunity to meet and greet. So taking people out and running training courses. We ran a few training courses at [client] as well on how to better [carry out an aspect of the client’s business], that’s probably one also.’

Ben: And you mentioned earlier client functions, does the client put those on and you attend them, or are they things that ORGA puts on to secure business?
It was clear from the interview data that there was a direct social element to ensuring continued business at ORGA. This ‘social’ method of obtaining business was often contrasted by interviewees with more indirect, less personal forms of marketing such as advertisements. Much of the success of the business seemed to be based on relationships that senior individuals had with individuals at other companies or organisations.

The role of alcohol use in entertaining clients appeared to be twofold. Again, the notion of the social drinking act as a tool to facilitate the development of social relationships with existing clients was apparent here:

**P9.** ‘But I guess it’s [alcohol use] seen as part of, you’re hosting [a client], um, then we’ll usually put on the invite. Come at 4, we’ll talk through this, some regulatory change, what that might mean for you, and it’s a good chance for us to have a chat over a drink. So I guess it’s a means to getting people talking. Most people I guess if they stood there with a drink, be it alcohol or a Coke in their hand, there’s a comfort nature in that.’

*Ben: It’s almost like a shared activity between two people…*

**P9.** ‘That’s right, and even if you’ve got nothing to say, or you wanna go talk to them, you can always say ‘Can I get you a drink?’ . So I think it’s more of a, it’s more of a social medium, alcohol is by no means the focal point of that.’
In the above quote, it is quite clear that social drinking act was, in the eyes of the interviewee, an effective way of starting and maintaining a conversation with a client. The use of alcohol (and the ‘etiquette’ around drinking) as a means for starting and maintaining a conversation was a theme that was mentioned by a number of interviewees. One particular interviewee eloquently described alcohol as ‘a prop’ in these situations, and actually highlighted how she had been trained by the company in the ways she could use alcohol at client functions as a means of talking to different people:

*P16. ‘Yeah and you actually get taught to use, drink in the left hand shake with your right. So there’s etiquette around it. If we were to be networking in a room and I just met you, and we were having a conversation, and I noticed your drink was low, and we’d been having a conversation, and there were a couple of other people in the room that I wanted to talk to, I might say, ‘oh I see you’re out of a drink’ or ‘do you want a top up can I get you one?’, bring it back and say ‘here you go it’s been really lovely talking with you but I’m just going to take the opportunity to go and talk to others’. *We actually were shown, taught or shown, as part of some of the courses we go on how to use that as a way to facilitate our networking. So it’s a prop.’*

As is evident in the quote above then, interviewees could successfully use alcohol as an object to ease the process of speaking to unfamiliar individuals. More specifically, the social drinking act appeared to be a key way in which ORGA members impressed the firm’s identity (or at least the aspects of the firm they wished to communicate) upon clients. ORGA members could discuss some of the firm’s most recent successes, or how they could add value to a client’s business ‘over a drink’, with alcohol use making such conversations easier to undertake due to the sense of informality both ORGA members and clients attributed to the drinking act.
Another theme that emerged in these discussions of Impressing identity was how the actual quality (or perceived quality) of the drink that was provided to clients by ORGA members could be used to strengthen a relationship with a client. The actual drink itself could serve as a symbol of the firm’s identity (or at least the ‘identity’ ORGA wished to communicate to clients). In particular, the notion that the company was the ‘best in its field’ could be effectively communicated to clients by providing them with expensive or high quality wine at, for example, client functions:

*P6. ‘We might serve a really nice bottle of wine, to quite a high level event, but if it just involves people, like ORGA staff, we’re gonna serve pretty average beer, maybe a 15 dollar bottle of wine.’*

Note the distinction in the above quote between ‘just ORGA staff’ and those outside of the firm. Clearly there was much more deliberate consideration of the type of drinks provided at functions that involved outsiders than there was into what type of drinks to provide at intra-organisational events. Wine seemed to be a useful drink in this respect, due to its moderate alcohol content (rather than spirits which would send the wrong message to clients, that ORGA were deliberately trying to intoxicate them or not ‘serious’ enough etc) and the fact that wines have a clear hierarchy of quality and status of their own. Thus, the use of wine at client events presented ORGA management with the opportunity to choose what type of message about ORGA they wished to communicate to the client(s) in question. The following quotes emphasise this point:

*‘It’s wine. Probably wine. People will not, I can’t recall going out to lunch with a client recently, you know I go out once a fortnight, I can’t recall a situation in the*
last 5, 6, 7, 10 years of a client drinking spirits at lunch time. Beer - yes, occasionally. But predominantly wine. ‘

‘...we [ORGA] can probably serve a better quality of wine than so and so down the road. The quality of alcohol we serve is slightly better, it’s not Lion Brown it’s Stella Artois. Or it’s Martinborough Pinot Noir instead of bloody Chateau De Wagga Wagga. There is an element of that, there is an element of elitism.’

‘I mean, all our events are organised around drinking, around wine, you know went to [function venue] but we’re only gonna go if they order this sort of wine. More consideration on the wine than the place or food.’

The above quotes seem to fit with the concept of ‘symbolic consumption’ described by Brain (2000). That is, ORGA deliberately ‘put on’ alcoholic beverages at functions that portrayed the appropriate or desired image to clients. In the case of ORGA, it would appear the image of the firm as ‘the best’ or, as described in the quote above, as being ‘elite’, was one senior management tried to convey by serving a high quality wine. This aligns with the way in which interviewees described the key characteristics of ORGA when asked. It seemed that the expectation of excellence was very deeply ingrained in the firm’s identity (or at least its identity in the eyes of ORGA’s members), so deep in fact that many interviewees intimated that there was no conscious thought that they had to deliver top quality work, it was ‘just the way it was’:

‘I think it’s the lack of tolerance about mistakes. Everything has to completely accurate, micro managing. I think there is a real element of that. There is an expectation that everything we do has to be a hundred percent correct. You know, and it’s risk management. We can’t make mistakes.’
P3. ‘I think it’s become part of what you do. You never, I don’t think anyone anymore consciously thinks ‘oh I’ve gotta do this the best we can do’ - it’s just the way that it’s done. You just take it as it comes. How do I describe it better, it’s nothing out of the ordinary anymore.’

P4. ‘Yeah. I guess as well when you come in…there’s certain things that are expected and there’s certain things you expect. So it’s kind of, there’s no real, I dunno there’s no real discussion because it just happens, or it’s just an expectation, or it’s just the way it is...’

Entertaining potential clients

In an almost identical manner to how existing clients were treated, ORGA members adopted the same approach to trying to obtain business from potential clients. ORGA’s senior management hosted client and networking functions, training seminars, and sponsored other events in attempts to meet potential clients that they could offer their services to. The only area of difference between impressing upon existing clients and potential clients was that potential clients, given the lack of a strong existing relationship with ORGA, would not ordinarily be taken out to lunch or dinner. However, given the almost identical nature of ORGA’s impressing upon existing clients and potential clients, the above discussion of alcohol use in impressing processes as they pertained to existing clients can also be considered fully relevant to processes of impressing upon potential clients.
CHAPTER 5 - Discussion

Introduction

The findings that emerged in the empirical investigation are theoretically important for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the findings give further weight to the notion that the work lives of individuals and the organisations they are part of are important in understanding why they use alcohol in the ways that they do. At a more specific level, I believe the findings highlight how processes of organisational identification, and indeed organisational identity itself, might both encourage and inhibit an individual’s alcohol use. The findings also contribute to the literature on knowledge-intensive workplaces (KIWs), and highlight how alcohol use can be an important part of life in these types of organisation. It is also argued here that my use of concepts from organisational behaviour illustrate how the work-alcohol relationship can be theorised in a more advanced manner. The current study can then be seen as a valuable ‘model’ for how more theoretically developed studies of the work-alcohol relationship might appear in future.

Alcohol Use and Organisational Identity

Based on the findings, it certainly appears that alcohol use, particularly the social drinking act, can be framed as a sub-part of the broader process of forming a sense of organisational identity. For two of Hatch & Schultz’s (2002) four identification processes, Expressing and Impressing, there was a substantial amount of empirical evidence to suggest that alcohol use was present in both respective processes. There was also evidence to suggest that alcohol played a role in processes of Reflecting on
organisational identity. Alcohol did not appear to play any significant role in the Mirroring process however.

In terms of the Reflecting process, the social drinking act provided a forum for interviewees to reflect on ORGA, their current projects, and the individuals that they worked with. Whether in the company of work colleagues or friends unrelated to ORGA, the drinking act served a functional purpose for the interviewees in that it allowed them to explore and make sense of various aspects of ORGA.

The extent to which these were actually processes of Reflection on ORGA’s identity however is somewhat debatable. Based on Hatch & Schultz’s (2002) account, it would seem that the Reflection process is one that involves a deep questioning of an organisation’s central characteristics. While this type of reflection could be undertaken ‘over a drink’, the extent to which interviewees’ actual conversations constituted this kind of reflection appeared to be quite limited. Instead, more pedestrian details of work formed the basis of discussions, such as bad clients, a frustrating co-worker, or a difficult work task.

Nevertheless, through discussion of the more ‘surface level’ aspects of work, there is certainly a possibility that the deeper aspects of ORGA’s identity could be indirectly reflected on by workers. For example, what might start out as a discussion about a difficult project amongst colleagues could lead to examination of the deeper causes of this difficulty, which could be related to some of the broader characteristics of ORGA’s identity. This ‘self-theorising’ actually occurred often during the interviews, where workers would begin describing what seemed like a relatively minor detail of
work life, and would then start to examine some of the broader, underlying reasons they thought might be the cause of it. However, the direct evidence of alcohol playing an important role in processes of Reflection from the data analysis is overall, fairly limited.

Perhaps those findings regarding the Reflection process would fit better with the work stress literature, with such studies positing that alcohol use provides workers with a means of relaxing and as a means of psychological release (Frone, 1999). The current study adds a degree of nuance to these findings, in that I found the conversations and social acts that individuals undertook together ‘over a drink’ were the providers of relaxation and stress relief, not necessarily the physiological effect of alcohol. What is interesting here is that a ‘drink’ didn’t necessarily have to be alcoholic, but more often than not an alcoholic drink was the drink of choice in terms of drinking as an activity to unwind.\textsuperscript{15}

This degree of detail regarding the social drinking act as a means of relieving stress is important because many of the previous stress-based studies can paint a picture of the worker as a ‘psychoactive consumer’ (Brain, 2000) using alcohol to chemically alter their mood from stressed to relaxed (Frone, 1999). Even during the interviews, interviewees themselves seemed quite uncomfortable associating their alcohol use with stress relief, fearing that their behaviour might be labelled as that of an ‘alcoholic’.

\textsuperscript{15} This disposition to alcoholic drinks is discussed in more detail later on.
A more common situation to the one implied by the stress literature, at least based on the interview data, was that many interviewees used alcohol as a means for social conversation and interaction. These social acts thus provided the psychological release they sought, not the physiological effect of alcohol. For the work stress literature then, future studies should integrate a higher degree of detail in terms of the ‘alcohol use’ of individuals, and attempt to separate discussions of the physiological effect of alcohol from those of the social drinking act itself. While more detailed typologies of the stress drivers of ‘alcohol use’ have been developed (e.g. Frone, 1999; Greenberg & Grunberg, 1996), there is a need for greater detail in respect of the ways in which individuals actually use alcohol to alleviate work stress or anxiety.

In addition to providing a functional form of ‘release’ for workers, the Reflection that was undertaken at ORGA-hosted functions was also very valuable for ORGA as a company. Firstly, the ORGA-hosted functions provided a means of ‘maintaining’ workers and ensuring that their social needs were met. Presumably, this was done to ensure motivation and job satisfaction was kept high, and consequently, a high degree of organisational performance was maintained. As mentioned previously, the social functions hosted by ORGA also provided an important opportunity for ORGA’s management to gather valuable information about ‘how things were going’ in the organisation.

What role did alcohol play in all of this? Based on the findings I believe it served two roles. In the first instance, alcohol, and in particular the ‘free’ alcohol that was ‘put on’ by ORGA, served to attract employees to the functions. It was common for
interviewees to mention that they did not believe the turnout would be ‘as good’ at the functions if alcohol was not provided, or if alcohol was available, but was not ‘free’ (this disposition to alcoholic drinks is again discussed later). Secondly, alcohol use served to ‘ease’ discussions at the functions / drinks, marking the time and space as ‘informal’, possibly inebriating workers slightly, and overall making employees more comfortable speaking to one another. From a theoretical standpoint then, the ORGA-hosted social functions (of which alcohol was a part) can be understood as a management tool, and a very effective one that served to keep employees satisfied and / or motivated.

In terms of the **Expressing process**, alcohol use played a prominent role in re-enforcing the central aspects of ORGA’s identity to its members. Alcohol was used frequently as a part of ORGA-hosted social functions, with both the social drinking act, and for some, the inebriating effect of the alcohol, being perceived as enhancers of social interaction and the depth of discussions amongst workers. Through these conversations, workers were able to share work stories, as well as relate to each through conversations about ‘non-work topics’ such as friends, family, hobbies, or weekend activities.

The use of alcohol as a means of bonding at ORGA seems to be a clear example of what Trice & Beyer (1984) call a ‘rite of integration’. According to Trice & Beyer, rites of integration ‘encourage and revive common feelings that bind members together and commit them to a social system’ (p. 657). This revival of ‘common feelings’ (e.g. work stories, discussions about ‘non-work’ topics) to ‘bind members’ was particularly evident in the use of alcohol at ORGA-hosted functions. It also
seemed that revival of ‘common feelings’ that were ‘non-work related’ (given that workers already knew commonality as to work would exist) were more effective in creating stronger bonds between workers, probably due to the fact that people saw others as more similar if they were related in a way that was not pre-established (i.e. was not through work). Overall, it was clear that alcohol use was an important ‘rite of integration’ (Trice & Beyer, 1984, p. 657) at ORGA. This served to strengthen members’ association with ORGA through interaction with its members and thus assisted members in Expressing various aspects of ORGA’s identity to one another through shared interaction and conversation.

This finding represents one of the most important theoretical implications of this study – the notion of alcohol use as a part of workers’ ‘work life’. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the use of alcohol as means of obtaining new business at ORGA (discussed later). This re-framing of alcohol use differs quite significantly from most of the work-alcohol literature, which tends to view the drivers of alcohol use as occurring ‘during work’, and the actual use of alcohol as occurring ‘outside of work’ (e.g. Trice & Sonnenstuhl (1988) provide some examples). From the findings in the current study however, it would seem that alcohol use could be undertaken in both ‘work’ and ‘non-work’ times and spaces, a conclusion that aligns with those authors who adopt a more ‘cultural’ perspective on the work-alcohol relationship, such as Bennett & Lehman (1999), Cooper et al. (1990) and Schaef & Fassel (1988).

This re-framing of alcohol use as it relates to work is important because it reminds researchers to not only focus on what aspects of an organisation cause workers to drink, but also how some organisations might ‘require’ or prompt individuals to use
alcohol in order to be effective in their role within an organisation. As outlined in my literature review, the adverse effects of heavy alcohol use on individuals are numerous and diverse. In a way then, the findings of the current study can be seen as adding support to the metaphor of organisations as ‘dominating structures’ (Morgan, 2006). Though ORGA by no means ‘forced’ employees to drink heavily, in organisations where such ‘rites of integration’ involving alcohol are more intense and more integral to organisational life (e.g. college fraternities as studied by Workman (2004)), we see a new and relatively unexplored example of the ways in which organisations can have a detrimental impact (in this case, a physiological and/or psychological one through the harms of alcohol) on the well-being of their members.

Also related to the process of Expressing organisational identity, alcohol, or at least functions at which alcohol was provided, appeared to be used by senior individuals at ORGA as a reward for the rest of the workers (i.e. as a form of celebration) and thus provided management with a tool by which desirable worker behaviour could be signalled to the workers themselves. In this way, ORGA’s broader organisational identity (or at least its desired corporate identity) was shaped by senior management through the provision of celebrations involving alcohol. For example, if workers were to complete a high quality piece of work, they were rewarded with team/group ‘drinks’. This use of alcohol as a reward was an effective signal to worker as to what was desirable work behaviour from a managerial standpoint (this control-based nature of alcohol use at ORGA is discussed further in the KIW section of the Discussion).
The process of **Impressing** organisational identity was also very important for ORGA and was a process in which alcohol was frequently involved. Alcohol was provided at functions and events that were underpinned by an intention to communicate a particular ‘version’ of ORGA’s identity to existing and potential clients. This was done to ensure either that existing relationships were strengthened with existing clients (and thus ensuring continued business and the potential for cross selling in future), or to create new business relationships with potential clients.

Alcohol served multiple roles in these Impressing processes. Firstly, alcohol could be used as a symbol of the ‘version’ of ORGA’s identity that it hoped to communicate to clients / potential clients. It was quite clear from the interviews with those involved in co-ordinating client events that thought was definitely given to what drinks were provided for clients, the implication being that different drinks (and the cost of drinks especially) communicated a particular message to clients. It was important that the drinks provided to clients aligned with the notion of ORGA as an elite, high performing firm. This finding aligns with that of Pratt & Rafaeli (1997), who found that organisational dress was an important symbol of hospital staff’s organisational identity. In the current study, we see an analogous example of an identity symbol – alcoholic beverages provided to clients.

Alcohol was also an important means of establishing a conversation at networking functions through which a ‘version’ of ORGA’s identity could be communicated to existing / potential clients. Alcohol use was perceived by interviewees as a) symbolising an informal space in which ‘deeper’ discussions could be had with
clients / potential clients as opposed to the more ‘guarded’ conversations had in more formal situations and b) the physiological effect could ‘loosen up’ clients / potential clients and make conversations ‘easier’. The first of these conclusions is significant because it highlights how alcohol was actually an important means by which members of ORGA (particularly senior ones) were able to maintain / obtain business relationships. In this way, the use of alcohol can again be understood as a part of members’ work activities – a framing of alcohol use that is quite different to how it is traditionally conceptualised in work-alcohol studies.

The second conclusion, that of alcohol as a ‘social lubricant’ is already well-explored (e.g. Mandelbaum, 1965; Trice & Roman, 1978) and does not require further discussion here. Still, it is an important finding in that it formally highlights how the notion of alcohol as a ‘social lubricant’ is still present in what would traditionally be considered a very ‘formal’ environment, that of the workplace.

The only process that lacked any real evidence from the interviews was **Mirroring** – the act of outsiders’ perceptions of the firm becoming visible to organisational members. In some ways, this type of activity could certainly occur at client functions or client information evenings, but I felt that, based on the lack of discussions of this phenomenon, in interviews, the role of alcohol in the Mirroring process was too minor to proclaim it a ‘finding’ with any real conviction. In some ways, this could suggest that the Hatch & Schultz (2002) framework is not entirely appropriate for theorising the organisational identity-alcohol relationship. However, I do not believe this is an accurate conclusion given that alcohol use was so prominent in the Impressing and Expressing processes.
In addition to assisting in forming a sense of identity, interviewees’ alcohol use was also affected by the ‘outputs’ of the identification processes - those characteristics that were ‘central, enduring, and distinctive’ (Albert & Whetten, 1985) to the organisation (or at least in the eyes of its members). That is, ORGA’s ‘organisational identity’ seemed to play an important role in both limiting, and at times, encouraging alcohol use amongst workers.

On the one hand, the valued characteristics amongst ORGA members of being a highly reputable company known for producing the best quality work in its field were strongly internalised by the workers, and appeared to be a source of pride for them. To ensure these high organisational expectations were met at an individual level, interviewees made a conscious effort to limit their drinking behaviour during the week when their identity as a member of ORGA took priority. The interviewees instead engaged in drinking activities in their ‘personal’ or ‘non-work’ time on the weekends. This is consistent with the findings of Parker & Williams (2003), who found that young adults often viewed their drinking activities as part of a ‘work hard, play hard’ lifestyle (a term that frequently arose in my own interviews), and would engage in heavier drinking sessions on the weekends for the same reasons described by the interviewees here.

The important implication of this finding regarding timing of alcohol use, is that it provides quite a different angle to the mainstream public health ‘binge drinking’ discourse (Measham & Brain, 2005) of alcohol use. In the current findings, we can see some of the deeper reasons why individuals would engage in heavier drinking
during the weekend relative to their drinking during the week. In this case, the ORGA member’s work and sense of organisational identity played an important part in dictating when and how much alcohol would be consumed. The deliberate ‘compartmentalising’ of their alcohol use into a particular pocket of the week was driven to a significant extent by work-related considerations, particularly the desire to produce the quality of work expected of ORGA and its members (from both members of ORGA and outsiders). Thus, the compartmentalisation of their drinking into weekend time was not necessarily the result of some innate, essentialistic drive to consume alcohol heavily on the weekends that the ‘binge drinking’ discourse would seem to suggest, but rather the result of their participation in a particular organisation.

This re-frames ‘binge drinking’ as the outcome of participation in a particular organisation. While it must be remembered that this is only one angle on the ‘binge drinking’ issue, it is nevertheless important because it reminds researchers and stakeholders alike that it is very risky to assume that individuals are drinking in particular ‘pockets’ of time because of an essentialistic change in mentality. Rather, the consumption of alcohol can be understood in the current study as an outcome of an individual’s identification with their workplace (i.e. a response to their environment). Whether individuals would drink greater quantities in ‘pockets’ of the week (i.e. the weekend) to compensate for not drinking during the week is unclear as it was not directly discussed in interviews, but it is certainly a potential theoretical conclusion that could be investigated in future.
This idea of ORGA’s identity as an inhibitor of workers’ alcohol use also opens up another area of quite positive discussion - that workplaces, and organisational identity more specifically, can in fact be very successful in limiting or reducing an individuals’ alcohol intake to ‘healthier’ levels. While this could be quite unfavourable if taken to the extreme (i.e. eventually issues around individual liberty and freedom would arise, which have been well explored by authors such as Casey (1999) and Alvesson & Willmott (2002)), the good news here, particularly for policy makers, is that partnerships with workplaces, given the seemingly important role they play in governing an individuals’ alcohol use and behaviour in general, could be useful in implementing measures to reduce alcohol consumption, or promote ‘safer’ levels of/ types of consumption, depending on the policy approach taken.

In contrast to ORGA’s identity limiting an individuals’ alcohol intake however, the use of alcohol at ORGA as a means of maintaining its identity as a company with ‘the best’ or most profitable clients served to at times increase the amount interviewees would otherwise drink. This was mainly due to the vast amount of networking and client functions that workers either hosted or attended in an effort to maintain this aspect of ORGA’s identity and Impress ORGA’s identity upon clients. Given that these events often involved alcohol, employees would often find themselves drinking in order to ‘fit’ with the unspoken norms of the situation at hand and make networking / building client relationships ‘easier’.

This finding is particularly important because in cases such as these, alcohol use is again seen as a part of the individual’s ‘work’ (i.e. part of communicating / shaping organisational image in the eyes of outsiders). As one interviewee stated, this type of
activity would ‘not be listed on an employment contract’, but it nevertheless raises an important point about what kinds of acts individuals might find themselves undertaking in order to meet the expectations of their employing organisation.

Another aspect of organisational identity that seemed to encourage individual’s alcohol intake, was the stress relief / unwinding activities that were seemingly a ‘by-product’ of the ‘expectation of excellence’ that was so central to ORGA’s identity. Many employees seemed to use alcohol and the social drinking act as a way of unwinding or relaxing, so as to counteract the stress or sense of pressure that one could be subjected to as a result of the sense of expectation (and the associated long hours and sheer amount of work they were expected to undertake).

In this way, ORGA’s identity could at times be a burden for employees that resulted in anxiety or feelings of stress. This conclusion would, to some extent, appear to fit with the vast literature on work stress and alcohol that correlates higher stress levels with higher alcohol use (Frone, 1999). This was certainly not the case for most interviewees though. Many explained that they did not drink more heavily after a stressful week or day, but it certainly appeared that drinking was a common way in which some of the interviewees ‘unwound’ after a testing work week.

All of the findings of organisational identity causing individuals’ to use alcohol are similar to those cultural / identity-based organisational studies that attempt to uncover the less favourable aspects of organisational cultures and identities. That employees at ORGA were potentially harming themselves both mentally (through stress and alcohol use) and physically (through alcohol use as a remedy to stress, and
alcohol use as a part of gaining business etc) adds support to the findings of authors such as Casey (1999) and Alvesson & Willmott (2002). Here we see yet another study to add to the growing number of investigations of the potentially harmful effects of organisational identities that too strongly dictate the behavior of the individual.

In addition to the contributions the current study makes to organisational identity and the work-alcohol literature, it is worthwhile discussing the point that many of the findings here would appear to fit well with discussions and theories of organisational ‘liminality’ (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003). Sturdy, Schwarz & Spicer (2006) for example examined the act of evening meals between consultants and clients, and describe them as a ‘liminal space’ (‘a space between formal institutions where institutionalized or cultural rules, norms and routines are suspended or not applicable’ p. 932) governed by ‘precisely and socially defined rituals and routines’ (p. 931).

This fits exactly with the explanation offered by one interviewee, who described alcohol as a ‘prop’ that assisted in networking and meeting potential clients at functions and drinks evenings. It also fits with ORGA’s use of alcohol as a means of forming and strengthening intra-firm relationships and re-enforcing the firm’s identity. It would seem that interviewees certainly found it easier to communicate particular aspects of the firm’s identity to potential clients and to ‘get to know each other’ when they felt less inhibited by the formal structures and processes of their

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16 It is important to note here that the organisational identity at ORGA seemed to be much more positive overall for employees (i.e. a source of belongingness and self-esteem) rather than negative. However, this discussion about the ‘darker’ side of organisational identity is certainly relevant for the minority who did use alcohol quite heavily to alleviate stress caused by the pressure of expectation at ORGA, and also for the majority who ‘had to be around’ alcohol as a part of securing business for the firm.
own organisation. Alcohol not only assisted in these situations, but seemed to act as an effective ‘marker’ or ‘symbol’ of when a space and / or time was indeed ‘liminal’. The social drinking act in turn provided a new set of etiquette or structures that made communication amongst individuals ‘easier’ than communication within the rigid structures of formal organisation.

To conclude this discussion of organisational identity and its relationship to alcohol use, it is worthwhile reflecting on some of the positives and negatives of the particular organisational identity framework I chose to guide my study. While I feel that Hatch & Schultz’s (2002) served as a very useful framework that yielded important findings, I couldn’t help but feel at times it was difficult to accurately describe the work-alcohol relationship using the model given its highly focused nature. This limited focus was very useful for targeting my study (i.e. making it more manageable) and making sense of the large amount of data I obtained, but at times it felt as though there were many other issues at play that could not ‘find a place’ in my framing of the work-alcohol relationship.

Factors such as the ‘New Zealand drinking culture’ or the interviewees’ age as a influencing their alcohol use, which are further explored in the last section of the discussion, seemed to be strong themes that came across in the interviews. Clearly, these did not form part of my main theoretical focus (i.e. organisational identity), but it seemed that these macro cultural and social factors were quite deeply connected with organisational identification, and it was difficult at times to disentangle these factors and their role in interviewees’ alcohol use from the role of organisational identity. Overall I feel the Hatch & Schultz (2002) framework was still a very useful
theoretical guide, but in future I would be inclined to set it within a broader framework that allowed for connection of organisational identification to the macro socio-cultural environment.

Knowledge-Intensive Workplaces (KIWs), Knowledge Workers and the Work-Alcohol Relationship

The findings here suggest that KIWs are certainly a valuable site for generating and testing theories of the work-alcohol relationship. In particular, the current findings add further support to existing claims that in general, knowledge workers are a highly ‘career oriented’ group of people. The findings also show how both alcohol use and non-use can be important parts of a knowledge worker’s career progression. Moreover, the findings show how alcohol use can be very valuable from a management standpoint in KIWs, in terms of creating greater collegial bonds, obtaining information, and maintaining / gaining clients. Finally, the current findings raise important questions about the distinction between work and non-work in KIWs, and where the ‘boundary’ between these times and spaces is to be drawn, if at all.

What is first apparent from the findings is that interviewees certainly made a deliberate effort to regulate their drinking over the course of a week. This regulation was undertaken for numerous reasons, all of which were seemingly underpinned by the importance they attributed to their career and career prospects. Interviewees perceived a need to produce high quality work so as to meet the expectations of their superiors. Their superiors were, in the eyes of interviewees, the gatekeepers of their careers and their career progression, both within ORGA and, as a result of ORGA’s reputation, the broader professional services sector. The notion of knowledge
workers as being motivated by ‘long-term prospects of promotion and wealth of becoming a partner [for example]’ has also been noted by Alvesson (2004, p. 29) and Grey (1994).

If one was to produce high quality work, then interviewees believed they would be viewed by their superiors as more suitable for promotion and a greater amount of responsibility (i.e. high quality work led to career progression). Importantly however, high quality work could not be produced (supposedly) if one was to drink ‘too much’, due to ‘hangovers’ and the adverse physiological effects of heavy alcohol use. Alcohol use was then regulated by interviewees against the amount of work one was responsible for at any given time, so as to ensure the use of alcohol did not impact adversely on the quality of their work, and thus their career prospects and progression.

In addition, employees did not want to appear to be ‘drinking too much’ in the eyes of their superiors. For example, being ‘hung-over’, as a result of drinking too much the night before was seen by interviewees as a signal to superiors that one was unable to produce ‘the best’ quality work they were capable of. A hangover was also evidence (supposedly) that employees placed greater priority on an activity other than work, which was not desirable from a management standpoint. Another example of alcohol use adversely affecting personal image was ‘getting drunk’ in the presence of superiors, and consequently acting foolishly or ‘inappropriately’ (e.g. bad language, falling over, vomiting, or appearing ‘out of control’). Employees were very deliberate in ‘managing this risk’ at work functions by limiting their alcohol
intake to ensure a favourable personal image was cultivated in the eyes of ‘the gatekeepers’.

At the other extreme, not ‘drinking enough’ could also be a potential disadvantage for employees. While the drinker / non-drinker distinction was deemed as irrelevant to career progression in the interviews, I could not help but wonder how a non-drinker would fare career-wise at ORGA given the presence of alcohol in so many important areas of the firm. Interviewees were very quick to note that non-drinkers were deliberately accommodated for at ORGA functions through the provision of non-alcoholic beverages. The way in which this was communicated to me though suggested a degree of ‘forced’ accommodation, that members saw non-drinkers as an anomaly or outlier whose needs had to be deliberately met to avoid an uncomfortable situation. The notion of drinking, rather than not drinking, as the norm at ORGA also seemed to be supported by the fact that only one of 16 interviewees was a non-drinker.

Given that the interview data did not directly suggest the following conclusion, it is with a degree of caution that I suggest that drinking, to a certain degree, could make work life at ORGA (and other KIWs similar to it) ‘smoother’ and easier to perform, particularly the more ‘social’ aspects of the work that were necessary to progress one’s career (e.g. bonding with colleagues, socialising with clients). The use of alcohol in so many important organisational events and activities seemed to make success at these types of activities more likely if one was able to use alcohol to one’s advantage in say, starting a conversation with an unfamiliar work colleague or client.
In addition, the above discussion highlights just how important ‘the career’ was for ORGA workers. This adds further support to the findings of authors such as Grey (1994), who found that the knowledge workers in his study were controlled by a ‘project of self-management’. Karreman & Alvesson (2009) reached a very similar conclusion in their study of a consulting firm, with a ‘discourse of career, promotion and instrumentalism’ being one of the major discourses that dictated workers’ compliance with organisational expectations and norms. What is interesting in my study is that workers saw any ‘overuse’ of alcohol as being a ‘no-no’ from a management standpoint - the same group who ironically provided workers with more opportunities to drink in the first instance through providing it at ORGA-hosted functions.

Given that management to some extent ‘endorsed’ the use of alcohol through the provision of it, it seems that maintaining a balance between ‘drinking too much’ and ‘not drinking enough’ is an advantageous form of conduct for a knowledge worker’s career progression. The keyword here however is balance, with ‘drinking too much’ likely to be much more problematic than ‘not drinking enough’ due to the implications of the former for a worker’s output, as discussed above. Drinking an ‘appropriate’ amount provided one with opportunities to further their career, such as bonding and socialising with work colleagues, with management, as well as with potential and existing clients.

As mentioned in the discussion of alcohol use and organisational identity earlier, the findings here also make a valuable contribution to the literature on managerial control in KIWs. In my view and in the view of some of the interviewees, alcohol
was used by management to serve a number of valuable organisational ends. It provided management with a means of obtaining valuable information from employees, maintaining workers’ social needs (assuming they had such needs) thus motivating them work harder, and creating stronger team bonds and subsequently, a heightened degree of ‘concertive control’ (Barker, 1993).

From a theoretical standpoint then, the use of alcohol in KIWs can be understood as a tactical activity on behalf of senior management, and an activity that serves various beneficial functions for management. This adds another dimension to the findings of authors such as Alvesson (2004), Alvesson & Willmott (2002) and Casey (1993), who suggest that control in KIWs is often exercised through value-based means. The findings of the current study go some way to illustrating some of the specific means through which management attempts to control workers’ behaviour in KIWs. The previous research in this area seems to operate at quite an abstracted theoretical level, which is very useful for theoretical ends, but can be difficult for people to fully grasp due to an absence of more detailed illustrations of how ‘less visible’ forms of control might operate at an artefactual or ‘real world’ level. I believe the current study provides a useful illustration one way in which less ‘traditional’ forms of managerial control might manifest in a fairly ‘mundane’ or taken-for-granted aspect of organisational life in KIWs (i.e. alcohol use at work functions).

The key point that is again reiterated in the above discussion, is that alcohol use is by no means ‘removed’ or ‘separate’ from the work lives of individuals. As evidenced here, alcohol use can actually form an important part of work life for organisational members. This aligns to an extent with the insights of critical management studies, a
movement that is ‘critical of established social practices and institutional arrangements, CMS challenges prevailing relations of domination’ (Alvesson, Bridgman, & Willmott, 2011, p. 1). Through investigation of the way in which alcohol use might be considered as part of organisational identification, we see an example of how work in a knowledge-intensive setting (and workplaces in general) could potentially be detrimental to the health of workers if taken to the extreme.

Furthermore, the findings in the current study are illustrative of how management as a specific group within organisations might facilitate the use of alcohol in a firm to the detriment of the (physical and / or psychological) well-being of workers. While ORGA’s management appeared to be very responsible in the way they provided alcohol to workers (e.g. limited quantities at functions and always provided with food), I could not help but think that the constant presence of alcohol in the identification processes of the organisation was re-enforcing the status of alcohol use as a ‘normal’ activity in society. Based on the interview data though, I believe that ORGA was just another societal institution in the workers’ lives which facilitated the normalisation of alcohol use in this way. While work represents a very important institution in this respect, it cannot be considered in isolation from the broader system of alcohol normalisation of which I believe it is a part. This system of normalisation is discussed further in the final section of this Discussion.

A final theme of relevance to KIWs and one that consistently arose in interviews (but which did not really fit with my theoretical base) concerned the influence of ORGA’s budget on the availability of alcohol to workers. Most interviewees agreed that because ORGA was a corporate company with a fairly steady income stream
and extensive budget, it hosted more alcohol-based events for workers and clients than other workplaces. In this respect, workers believed that because the alcohol was provided to them at no charge, they would stay to drink on Fridays for example because ‘it was free’.

This finding is similar to those theories of alcohol availability, which posit that if individuals are provided with more opportunities to drink, they will more often than not take advantage of them (Ames, Grube & Moore 2000; Ames et al. 2009; Trice & Sonnenstuhl, 1988). The concept of the ‘free drink’ in corporate workplaces (or workplaces with extensive monetary budgets) could be a valuable direction for future research. Studies based on availability theory generally focus on things such as the proximity of drinking sites (such as bars) to the workplace, but do not look at the more indirect ways that alcohol might be made available to workers (e.g. company budgets that provide for alcohol-based events). A quantitative study could be quite useful in investigating this budget-alcohol use relationship, where companies with varying monetary resources and the drinking activities of their respective workers are measured and compared.

In conclusion, the above discussions confirms my initial view that KIWs do indeed represent a highly active site of work-alcohol activity. Alcohol use was linked by interviewees to a diverse range of phenomena that had in my literature review been identified as distinguishing features of KIWs. Most clearly in the current study, alcohol use can be theorised as a part of the identification processes that are at play in KIWs. Alcohol, or more specifically the prospect of an opportunity for workers’ to use it, can also be understood as a subtle form or ‘less visible’ form of managerial
control in KIW (Alvesson, 2004). Overall then, there is certainly a wealth of potential research that could be conducted in future to simultaneously develop both theories of the work-alcohol relationship, as well as understandings of knowledge-intensive workplaces. The current study goes some way to outlining some specific avenues for such investigations.

**Support for the General Work-Alcohol Relationship**

Given the sheer volume of data collected, it would seem that the work-alcohol relationship is certainly not one to be ignored when examining why individuals use alcohol. Work and organizational life, based on these findings and those of many others (Trice & Roman (1978) provide a comprehensive review) are important considerations in understanding individuals’ use of alcohol. Aside from reiterating what has already been said by previous authors, what specifically do the current findings contribute to the work-alcohol field? This question is implicitly answered in all the above sections of the discussion. I believe the current study effectively shows how the more advanced conceptual material from organisational studies can be integrated into the work-alcohol field in order to gain insight into how alcohol might be used in the less ‘informal’ aspects of organisation.

As outlined in my literature review, the field of organisational identity has been thoroughly developed by scholars over the last two decades. As a result, there is a wealth of theoretical material to drawn on in theorising organisational life. By drawing on this material for the current study, I believe I was successfully able to theorise the work-alcohol relationship in a way that was multi-faceted and more
authentic (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) to the way that interviewees’ themselves experienced the relationship in their own lives. This sense of authenticity that was achieved through the use of a more developed theoretical base (organisational identity) is something that future work-alcohol studies should also attempt to achieve. By drawing on other well-developed theoretical materials (or even a different organisational identity theory), I believe more authentic and advanced theories of the work-alcohol relationship can be developed, which will ultimately assist in deepening our understanding of alcohol use in general.

In addition to the above suggestion, another future research direction that I think would be of exceptional value for work-alcohol studies is a large scale, comparative qualitative study of a variety of different work places. While the ‘case study’ approach I adopted made the research manageable and focussed, it was difficult at times not having a comparative group from an entirely different type of workplace from which to draw comparisons and contrasts. Though somewhat hopeful, a qualitative study that gathered data from a diverse range of organizations and drew comparisons between the different sites would serve to deepen understandings of why individuals use alcohol in particular ways. While quantitative studies of this sort have been undertaken to ascertain the quantity of alcohol intake across different occupations (e.g. Hemmingsson et al, 1997), a study that adopted a qualitative approach similar to the approach used in the current study across multiple and varied workplaces would be very useful for the theoretical value that it would add to the work-alcohol field.
Another site where future research would definitely be valuable is in organisations other than workplaces. For example, sports clubs and other leisure clubs were often cited by interviewees as a site where much of their drinking was undertaken. Indeed a significant amount of research has examined the way in which alcohol use and sports may or may not be connected, with many finding that participation in organised sports (at least for youth) was negatively related to alcohol use (e.g. Hellandjso Bu et al., 2002; Thorlindsson, 1989). Given the prominence of this theme in my own interviews, investigating the broader organisation-alcohol relationship would provide further insight into individuals’ use of alcohol over and above that of ‘just workplaces’. This has already begun to be undertaken in sites such as college fraternities (Workman, 2001), but a greater degree of creativity when selecting sites for investigating the organisation-alcohol relationship could be particularly useful in deepening understanding of people’s alcohol use.

Finally, my analysis generated around 37 themes from only 16 interviews, which would suggest that the work-alcohol relationship is rather complex and does not neatly ‘fit’ within a focused framework of organisational identity, or any other framework for that matter. This was indeed the impression that I received from interviewees. Given the need to structure the findings and guide my research, the above findings paint quite a ‘tidy’ picture of the work-alcohol relationship. It would seem however that even the interviewees themselves struggled to fully articulate their reasons for drinking, or how their work might be connected to their use of alcohol. The relationship was often bound up with non-work related explanations and factors, such as socialising with friends, their current age and stage of life, and so forth. To me, this indicates a need to consider the work-alcohol relationship
discussed above in conjunction with all of these broader factors, some of which are discussed in more depth in the following section.

**Insights for General Alcohol Theory**

Independent from ORGA, the prospect of alcohol seemed to be well established as desirable, or a source of enjoyment in the minds of the workers. While ORGA management exploited this seemingly pre-existing disposition amongst its workers, it did not appear to have created this association between enjoyment and alcohol use in the minds of the workers prior to them becoming members of the organisation. However, the findings from the current study show how ORGA as a workplace probably re-enforced or further ‘normalised’ this alcohol-enjoyment association by using alcohol in so many different ways for its staff.

Interviewees however did not seem to view the alcohol-enjoyment association as being re-enforced by ORGA or ‘workplaces’ more generally. Instead they often cited ‘The New Zealand Drinking Culture’ (NZDC) as the most important driver of their own and others’ use of alcohol for enjoyment. At a personal level, I found the constant NZDC line of reasoning amongst interviewees to be somewhat problematic.

It was a line of reasoning that I had found very strongly entrenched in media reports of New Zealanders’ drinking activities (see Appendix 5 for some examples of New Zealand news headlines that employ the NZDC framing). The problem with this discourse around the ‘NZDC’ is that while it raises awareness of the issue, it implies that the ‘alcohol problem’ is one that is operating at a macro-cultural level that is
unable to be impacted by human action. In this way, the actions of stakeholders that attempt to reduce alcohol use amongst New Zealanders to healthier levels can, as implied by the ‘NZDC’ discourse, only affect change in peoples’ drinking activities to a limited extent, given the supposedly ingrained, grand and intangible nature of the ‘NZDC’.

Employment of the ‘NZDC’ discourse then, whether intended or not, can in my view stunt further attempts to address the heavy alcohol use of individuals by making persons’ actions to reduce alcohol use seem rather ineffectual in the face of such a ‘serious’, ‘big’, or ‘culturally embedded’ phenomenon. Ironically then, the well-meaning individuals that attempt to reduce alcohol-related harms by employing the ‘NZDC’ discourse can actually stagnate, or reduce confidence in, any future efforts to address the supposed ‘NZDC’ by further reinforcing the status of the ‘NZDC’ as grand, intangible and ‘here to stay’.

Indeed there appears to be no literature that addresses what I have termed the ‘NZDC’ discourse. There is certainly potential then for a future study that ‘deconstructs’ (Derrida, 1988) or critically analyses the outcome of employing the discursive ‘New Zealand Drinking Culture’ line of reasoning. Whilst not the focus of the current thesis, this is an issue that is in my view deserving of academic attention, given the possibility that employing the ‘NZDC’ may actually be framing the ‘drinking issue’ in a way that is not conducive to reducing heavy alcohol use amongst New Zealanders.
It is my own view that the ‘NZDC’ is better understood as a broader socio-cultural system that continually constructs and reconstructs the alcohol-enjoyment association in the minds of individuals who participate in it. ORGA and workplaces more generally are but a single component within this system of meaning production. As a result, I believe it is more constructive from a public health perspective to discuss the specific institutions and activities that reproduce or ‘normalise’ the alcohol-enjoyment association (e.g. the workplace has been the institution of interest in the current study), rather than the entire ‘system’ as a whole (i.e. the ‘NZDC’). Through focused investigation of the system’s individual parts (e.g. organisations), I believe public health stakeholders are better placed to gain a deeper understanding of why it is that New Zealanders use alcohol in the ways that they do, and to subsequently take actions that are more effective in reducing the heavy use of alcohol and its resulting harms.

In a related issue, the humour that interviewees, and myself as a participant in the discussion, attached to descriptions of drunkenness also warrants exploration. When individuals were discussing drunken acts, there seemed to be a degree of humour involved in reminiscing over them, much like Workman (2004) found in his analyses of the ‘drinking’ stories of college students. The association of humour with drinking and / or drunkenness has also been explored in a particularly interesting study of greeting cards conducted by Finn (1980). He found that attitudes of humour, enjoyment, and pleasure were much more strongly associated with alcohol use in his sample of 129 greeting cards (with alcohol as a major theme) than attitudes of moderation.
The humour associated with drinking and drunkenness in interviews is an important point, because it is again reflective of how a broader socio-cultural system had constructed the use of alcohol and drunkenness in a particular way for interviewees and also for myself (i.e. ‘drunkenness as funny’). I always found this experience in interviews (and in my own life in general) somewhat strange. Even though I was conducting an entire research study on the use of alcohol and was fully aware of how harmful the heavy use of alcohol could be, I still found myself laughing at tales of drunkenness in interviews. This could have been an attempt to establish a rapport with interviewees, but given that I still at times find similar stories of drunkenness humorous in private company, I do not think establishing rapport can be used as a justification for me finding conversations about drunkenness humorous in interviews.

As Finn (1980) suggests, humour is reflective of a culture or society’s deeper attitudes and values. An important future research avenue then would be more studies that adopt a similar line of inquiry to Finn (1980) and examine the specific ways in which the broader socio-cultural system of meaning production (discussed above in relation to the ‘NZDC’) comes to construct alcohol use and drunkenness as humorous. In my view it is a theoretically complex issue and one that I’m yet to fully understand. Through further investigations of the relationship between systems of meaning production, humour and alcohol use, a deeper understanding of the way individuals use alcohol is likely to be obtained.

Another aspect of the findings that cannot be neglected is the role of age or ‘stage of life’ in the drinking activities of the interviewees. The firm was often described as being ‘young’ by interviewees, in that the business model was based on hiring a pool
of younger graduates straight from university every year (around 22 years old and
upwards), with only a few senior individuals (30+ years old usually) responsible for
the younger workers. As a result, all but two of the interviewees were under 30 years
old, and as a result, most interviewees seemed to have similar drinking habits. Those
under 24 years old seemed to drink more in an ‘average week’ than those over 24.
Overall the notion of age was a consistent theme that individuals cited as important
in understanding their drinking activities in the interviews. The majority of
interviewees viewed drinking as ‘just something that [young New Zealanders] do’,
and something that tends to be done less as one ages, and especially when one takes
on the responsibility of a new family.

The prevalence of the ‘age’ theme as well as the ‘NZDC’ theme in the interviews
shows that it is very difficult to disentangle the various reasons for an individual’s
alcohol use from one another. Instead, as with most social phenomena, the
interviewees’ alcohol use appeared to be influenced by a number of different factors,
both work-related and non work-related. Another example would be personal
reputation. While this could be considered a part of ORGA’s broader identity,
employees also seemed to limit their drinking around senior individuals to protect
their personal image and reputation in the eyes of their superiors (i.e. being seen as a
‘good’ or ‘likable person’). The implication here then is that while organisational
identity seemed to play an important role in influencing interviewees’ alcohol use,
there is an ever present need to consider alcohol use as it pertains to other forms of
identity as well, such as age-based identity, personal identity and reputation, and
gender identity.
CHAPTER 6 - Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, I described a personal desire to explore my curiosity about people’s use of alcohol. I now find myself having completed my own study of alcohol use, and have subsequently attempted to generate my own academic contribution to the fields of organisational identity, work-alcohol, and knowledge-intensive workplaces.

There a number of theoretical insights yielded by my findings. Firstly, it would seem that the work lives of individuals are certainly an important factor in coming to understand why people use alcohol in the ways that they do. More specifically, it would seem that understanding alcohol use as part of organisational identification is a fruitful means of generating new insights into the work-alcohol relationship. Thirdly, my study indicates that knowledge-intensive workplaces, as a particular type of organisation, represent a valuable site for expanding knowledge on the work-alcohol relationship. Finally, the current study further shows how critical it is to understand people’s alcohol use in terms of the social institutions that give the use of alcohol its sense of meaning for users.

The challenge for researchers going forward then is to be mindful of and further explore alcohol use as a social activity that is embedded in a broader system of meaning construction and creation. That is, the meaning that attaches to alcohol use in the minds of individuals is largely determined by the social environment in which they exist. In addition to investigations of workplaces, future research should adopt a frame of enquiry that theorises the use of alcohol in its broader context. By
beginning to establish connections between all the different institutions, activities and organisations that continue to make alcohol use (and its respective set of meanings) an integral socio-cultural activity in societies, a better academic understanding of alcohol use can be obtained. For policy makers and public health stakeholders, such deeper sociological understandings are in my view, a fundamental requirement for the success of any and all attempts to reduce alcohol-related harms in our communities.
Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview Schedule

Section 1 – Basic Questions – 5 Minutes

- So tell me a bit about yourself and your work at ORGA?
- Be sure to ask how long they’ve been working there, current age, responsibilities and duties, division / sector.
- And how are you finding work at ORGA?
- Try and get them to reflect on both the pros and cons of work life so far

Section 2 – Alcohol – 15 minutes

- So at this stage, I just want to talk a bit about the way you use (or don’t use) alcohol. Would you be able to describe for me an average week in terms of how much you drink, where you drink, how often you drink, and who with?
- Try and get into a general discussion about the way that they drink, who with, in what settings, and most importantly, THEIR REASONS FOR DRINKING / NOT DRINKING!

Section 3 – The Organisational Identity Framework – Need To Look For Alcohol In This!!! – 15 minutes

- Mirroring: Tell me a bit about how your work colleagues react towards outsiders’ (could be clients, could be media, could be other companies) perceptions of ORGA? Is there an event that involved outsiders’ perceptions of ORGA that really sticks with you in terms of how it impacted upon the people you work with?
- Reflecting: How did you and your colleagues react to these kind of events?
- Expressing: What was the outcome of those reactions?

Section 4 – General Work-Alcohol Relationship – 15 minutes

- Do you think there is a relationship between the way you drink (or don’t drink) and your role at work?
- Why do you think that [there is a relationship]?
- What is the strength or weakness of the work-drinking relationship compared to other reasons you might have for drinking?
- Do you think this relationship / lack of relationship is specific to ‘knowledge-intensive workplaces’ or do you see it as quite general across all workplaces?
- To what extent is drinking a part of the ‘culture’ at your workplace?
- Do you ever have to drink as part of your actual work duties?
- In terms of your identity as a ‘knowledge worker’, do you think drinking is a part of that? (Does it “come with the territory”?)
Appendix 2 – Research Participant Information Sheet

Hi There,

My name is Ben Walker and I am a Master’s student at Victoria University of Wellington (Management School). For my thesis I am looking at alcohol use and its relationship to ‘knowledge-intensive work’. Specifically, I am interested in the ways in which alcohol is used / is not used by knowledge-intensive workers as part of building / reshaping their identities as members of a particular type of organisation. The aspect of alcohol use is also relevant to the ways in which knowledge-intensive firms integrate new employees into such unique work environments. My focus is on young knowledge workers (those aged 18 – 24)¹⁷. There have been few empirical work-alcohol studies that have examined knowledge-intensive firms as a unique research site in their own right. In addition, few studies have adopted an ‘organisational identity perspective’ on drinking amongst workers and the role that alcohol plays in processes of forming a sense of connection with one’s organisation.

Your organisation has been very helpful and has agreed to grant me access to its people in order to collect research data. If you would be interested in being interviewed as part of my research (which would be great), here are a couple of important details that are relevant for you as a potential participant:

- Participation in the study is totally voluntary. You are under no obligation to agree to participate in the study. The fact of your participation in the research project will not be disclosed to any third parties and / or anyone at your employing organisation.
- I have received approval from the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee to conduct this research, and as a result I can assure you that all research activities will conform to the Committee’s ethical policies and guidelines.
- I have attached to this information sheet a Consent Form for the interview. This outlines the key areas where Victoria University’s Human Ethics Committee Policy requires me to obtain your consent for participation.
- The research project is case study-based, meaning that data will only be obtained from people at your organisation. Interviews will be conducted with approximately 20 people from your organisation.
- All that is required of you is a 30 minute to 1 hour long interview with myself, to be conducted either at your workplace, at a café, or at the Victoria University Railway Campus (the location is left up to you to decide).

¹⁷ This criteria was changed to those ‘under 28’ for the second round of recruitment.
As stated in the Consent Form, your responses collected during the interview will be completely confidential. Anything you say will not be attributed to you in the final write-up, and will be reported in aggregated form (e.g. One participant stated that…). Also, any data that identifies you personally will only be read by my supervisor and myself. No data collected from your interview will be made available to anyone at your workplace or any third parties (aside from my supervisor). All electronic data, including audio recordings, will be stored electronically in a password-protected folder on my personal computer. All data recorded on paper will be kept in a secure folder at my home. All data, including audio recordings, will be destroyed by February 2014.

- The interview, with your permission, will be digitally recorded and transcribed by myself at a later date.

- The interview is fairly open-ended and will provide you with an opportunity to discuss a range of different aspects of work life at your current organisation. I have personally found interviews to be a rewarding process in this respect.

- Given the potential sensitivity of the issue of alcohol use, it is completely fine for you to pass on answering any questions or discussing any topics that arise in the interview without reason / further questioning on my behalf.

- Also, the amount / how often you drink is irrelevant to whether you’d make an appropriate candidate for the research. I’m interested in interviewing a group of people from the same work setting, regardless of the way in which they use alcohol.

- The identity of your organisation will also be kept confidential by myself / my supervisor. In order to ensure such confidentiality, you will have to agree (as part of the Consent Form) not to disclose the fact of your organisation’s participation in the research project to anyone outside the organisation.

- You will have the option to request an electronic copy of my final thesis (as per the Consent Form). However, due to the time constraints of a Masters thesis, I will not be asking for your feedback on the data I collect from you.

- The data I collect from your interview will be used to write my final Masters thesis. It is likely that the data will also be used to write articles for submission to academic journals and/or to write papers for submission to academic conferences. The confidentiality of your responses is ensured for any use the data I collect from you is put to.

- If you agree to participate in the research, but later change your mind, you have up until November 1 2011 to withdraw from the study.

If the research sounds interesting and you would like to be interviewed a part of the project, please contact me directly via any of the methods below. I have also attached my supervisor Todd Bridgman’s details should you have any questions or concerns that you feel are better directed at him.
Once again, your participation in this project would be really appreciated and would help to make a significant contribution to knowledge of alcohol use and its relationship to work.

Kind regards,

Researcher:  
Ben Walker  
VUW Masters Student  
walkerbenj@myvw.ac.nz  
Phone: 021-165-4224

Supervisor:  
Dr Todd Bridgman  
Senior Lecturer, Victoria Management School  
todd.bridgman@vuw.ac.nz  
Phone: 04-463-5118
Appendix 3 – Research Participant Consent Form

I understand that any data obtained in my interview will remain strictly confidential and will not be used in a way that makes me identifiable to any readers of the final paper(s).

I understand that my participation in this research project is totally voluntary, and that I am in no way obligated as a member of my organisation to participate in the study.

I agree to keep my employing organisation’s participation in this research project confidential. I understand that this means I cannot disclose the fact of my organisation’s participation in the research project to anyone outside the organisation.

I understand that no data collected from me will be made available to my employing organisation or any members of my employing organisation. I also understand that the fact of my participation in the project will not be disclosed to any third parties, including individuals at my employing organisation.

I understand that, given the potential sensitivity of the issue of alcohol use, I may, without reasons or further questioning from the researcher, elect to pass on answering any questions or topics that arise in the interview.

I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time before November 1 2011 without providing reasons.

I understand that if I withdraw from the project, any data I have provided, including audio recordings, will be destroyed.

I understand that the data I have provided will be used for the formation of a Masters thesis, and for formation of papers for submission to academic journals and academic conferences.

I understand that when this research is completed the information obtained and all audio recordings will be destroyed by 1 February 2014.
I wish to have a copy of the final thesis provided to me by the researcher.

I have been provided with adequate information relating to the nature and objectives of this research project, I have understood that information and have been given the opportunity to seek further clarification or explanations.

I consent to being interviewed as part of the research project.

I consent to having the interview recorded by digital audio recorder.

Participant:
Signed:
Name & Organisation:
Date:

Researcher:
Signed:
Name & Organisation:
Date:
# Appendix 4 – Coding Table Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN THEME</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Definition of Sub-Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. MIRRORING</td>
<td>No data to support</td>
<td>No data to support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. REFLECTING</td>
<td>1. Reflecting on work life and the company</td>
<td>Interviewees talk about the shared drinking act as a means of 'getting issues off their chest'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Re-considering organisational identity and image</td>
<td>Describing instances when the firm raised the question ‘who are we?’ in a critical manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. EXPRESSING</td>
<td>3. Reinforcing organisational identity</td>
<td>Drinking act is used to re-enforce aspects of the organisation's identity to it's members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Celebrating / rewarding success</td>
<td>Where interviewees describe drinking as an act of celebrating work-related achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Managerial control</td>
<td>Work-hosted drinking act is seen by interviewees as a means of ensuring they carry out what the organisation expects of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Intra-firm relationship-building</td>
<td>Drinking act / alcohol effect is seen as a means of developing relationships with work colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Induction</td>
<td>Drinking act / alcohol effect is seen as a means of making new employees feel comfortable in / attracting them to the firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. IMPRESSING</td>
<td>8. Networking</td>
<td>Role of drinking act / alcohol effect in creating new business opportunities is described</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Image management - organisational level</td>
<td>Alcoholic beverage / drinking event is described as a means of 'communicating' a particular image to outsiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Entertaining clients</td>
<td>Drinking act / alcohol effect is described as a means of maintaining and developing relationships with existing clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. OTHER THEMES</td>
<td>11. Stress / Relaxation</td>
<td>Work stress is described. Drinking act / alcohol effect is described as a reliever of stress, or way to unwind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Social punctuation mark</td>
<td>Drinking act / alcohol is described as a demarcation between different times and spaces.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Drinking &amp; Image - personal / professional level</td>
<td>Drinking act / alcohol effect (or lack of it) is described in terms of it's role in communicating a particular type of message about an individual to others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. General Image / Reputation</td>
<td>General comments about the aspects of personal / professional image in the workplace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Corporate budget</td>
<td>Budget available to the company and it's impact on the way an interviewee / others use alcohol is described</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Characteristics of the organisation - based on experience</td>
<td>Characteristics that the interviewee deems as important / unique to the company are described</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Characteristics of the organisation - perceptions of outsiders</td>
<td>Interviewee describes situations where an outsider has relayed their perception of the company to employee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Effect of organisational identity on individuals</td>
<td>Broader identity of the firm and it's impact on interviewee's thoughts, behaviour, and attitudes are described</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Attitude towards company</td>
<td>Where an interviewee describes their attitude towards the company.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Weekend drinking</td>
<td>Where an interviewee describes their drinking activities over an 'average weekend'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Weekday drinking</td>
<td>Where an interviewee describes their own (or other's) drinking activities over the course of an 'average working week'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Drinking evaluation</td>
<td>Where an interviewee makes an evaluation / judgement of their own drinking activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Income</td>
<td>Where an interviewee describes the impact of personal finances on their drinking activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Drinking companions</td>
<td>Where interviewees describes the people they drink with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5 – ‘New Zealand Drinking Culture’ Headlines

Government says 'heavy-drinking culture is fine': Sellman
BY KIRAN CHUG
Chug (2010, August 26).

Prominent Kiwis call for drinking culture reform
BY KATE NEWTON
Newton (2010, June 29).

Police: More work needed to change drinking culture

Parents horrified by binge-drinking culture
By Beck Vass
Vass (2010, August 16).
An historic opportunity to change New Zealand’s heavy drinking culture: A public statement by the Doctors and Nurses of New Zealand

“If alcohol were a communicable disease, a national emergency would be declared”
Dr William C Menninger (1957)

A once in a generation “first principles” review of New Zealand’s liquor laws is currently being conducted by the Law Commission in New Zealand, headed by ex-Prime Minister, Sir Geoffrey Palmer. This is a rare and historic opportunity for legal and social change to influence New Zealand’s heavy drinking culture.

The above is the heading and opening paragraph of a formal statement made by representatives of the Doctors and Nurses of New Zealand in conjunction with Alcohol Action New Zealand. The statement formally expresses support for change to New Zealand’s alcohol legislation, as proposed in the New Zealand Law Commission (2009) report cited in my thesis. The full statement can be found at the following URL:

References


