The ASPIRe model: Actualizing Social and Personal Identity Resources to enhance organizational outcomes

S. Alexander Haslam\textsuperscript{1,*}, Rachael A. Eggins\textsuperscript{2} and Katherine J. Reynolds\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}School of Psychology, University of Exeter, UK
\textsuperscript{2}School of Psychology, Australian National University, Australia

A growing body of research points to the contribution of social identity and self-categorization processes to organizational social capital. In particular, this is because all facets of collective behaviour (e.g., trust, communication, leadership, productivity) are facilitated to the extent that individuals define themselves in terms of higher-order social categories (i.e., as members of a common ingroup). However, very little work has sought to translate these social and cognitive insights into models of organizational practice. In an attempt to do this, the present paper outlines a four-phase model for Actualizing Social and Personal Identity Resources (the ASPIRe model). Within a relevant organizational unit, an initial phase involves ascertaining which social identities employees use collectively to define themselves (AIRing). In intermediate phases, relevant subgroups and then the organizational unit as a whole develop goals that are relevant to those identities (Sub-Casing and Super-Casing). In a final phase, organizational planning and direction are informed by the outcomes of the previous two phases and by the new organic organizational identity they produce (ORGanizing). Points of contact with alternative models are identified and the model’s potential to encourage sustainable productivity is discussed.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the fact that organizational success is not purely an economic issue – a question of financial capital. In particular, while an economic approach to organizational life (e.g., after Taylor, 1911) has suggested that management decisions needed to be guided by reverence for the financial bottom line, researchers are increasingly emphasizing the dangers of a failure to recognize and harness an organization’s social capital (Burt, 1997; Leana & van Buren, 1999; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital can be defined as those resources inherent in the network of alliances and relationships within a workforce that contribute to, amongst other things, an organization’s reputation, its members’ \textit{esprit de corps}, their loyalty and commitment.

An interest in these social aspects of organizational life and their contribution to organizational outcomes started around the middle of the last century with the
emergence of the human relations school (after Mayo, 1933, 1949). However, it has recently been revitalized as (a) managers have become disillusioned with organizational practices that continue to rely on an economic analysis (e.g., downsizing, deskilling, delaying; e.g., see Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 1997; Mintzberg, 1996; Pfeffer, 1997; Thompson & Warhurst, 1998) and (b) researchers have developed theoretical and practical tools that allow them to elaborate upon the principles and processes that were alluded to – but not formalized or fleshed out empirically – in human relations work (e.g., see Haslam, 2001, for a review).

In this paper, we present a model for identifying and utilizing social capital that draws upon one such development. Based upon insights from social identity and self-categorization theories (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), the model is informed by work which suggests that an organization’s social capital is partly determined by the identity resources of its employees. In particular, it focuses on two distinct resources: those associated with each employee’s sense of their unique personal identity and their shared social identity. The former resource relates to employees’ internalized definitions of themselves as individuals and the latter to their awareness that they are members of a common group (Tajfel, 1972; Turner, 1982). The model (and the research upon which it is predicated) suggests that appropriate identification and mobilization of these identity resources is a necessary component of organizational success. However, before outlining the model, we need to clarify some of its core theoretical underpinnings.

Social and personal identity

The distinction between personal and social identity developed from an early insight by Tajfel (1972, 1978) that, although they were ordered upon a continuum, there was a qualitative distinction between interpersonal and intergroup behaviour. Specifically, Tajfel argued that intergroup behaviour was associated with social identity – an individual’s “knowledge that he [or she] belongs to certain groups together with some emotional and value significance to him [or her] of the group membership” (1972, p. 31). Together with empirical evidence from the so-called “minimal group studies” (Tajfel, Flament, Billig, & Bundy, 1971), in which individuals who had been randomly assigned to meaningless groups were found to favour members of their own ingroup to another outgroup, this assertion formed the basis for social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A core tenet of this was that, having defined themselves in terms of a particular social identity, individuals act to maintain or enhance the positive distinctiveness of the group with which that identity is associated. So, for example, once a person defines themselves as an employee of workgroup X, they should seek to maintain or increase the prestige, exclusivity and stature of that workgroup – particularly in relation to others with which it is compared (e.g., workgroups Y and Z).

In the 20 or so years since this prediction was first made, it has received an enormous amount of empirical support (e.g., see Brewer, 1979; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Turner et al., 1987). When a given social identity is salient, individuals are thus found to act in ways that serve to advance group interests – striving to make their ingroup better than, and different from, salient outgroups – often at the expense of their own personal interests. These motivations have also been observed across a range of organizational contexts. So, where social identity is defined by membership of a given organization or work-team, the same desire to advance that unit’s interests is apparent. Amongst other
things, this leads to increases in (a) liking for the relevant organizational ingroup (Brown, 1978; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Terry & Callan, 1998), (b) organizational citizenship (Ouwerkerk, Ellemers, & de Gilder, 1999; van Knippenberg, 2000), (c) willingness to contribute to collective goals (Ellemers, de Gilder, & van den Heuvel, 1998; Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2000), (d) collective action (Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Veenstra & Haslam, 2000), and (e) group productivity (James & Greenberg, 1989; Worcel, Rothgerber, Day, Hart, & Butemeyer, 1998).

Elaborating on these ideas, a more complete explanation of individuals’ movement along Tajfel’s interpersonal–intergroup continuum was provided by Turner (1982) in the process of developing self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985; Turner et al., 1987). This hypothesizes that an individual’s self-concept can itself be defined along a continuum ranging from definition of the self in terms of personal identity to definition in terms of social identity. Moreover, it is proposed that the functioning of the self-concept is the cognitive mechanism that underpins the behavioural continuum described by Tajfel (1978). As Fig. 1 indicates, interpersonal behaviour is associated with a salient personal identity and intergroup behaviour with a salient social identity.

The psychological process that underpins social identity salience was referred to by Turner (1982) as depersonalization. This is a process of self-stereotyping through which the self comes to be perceived as categorically interchangeable with other ingroup members. So, when social identity is salient, it is predicted that individuals come to see other ingroup members as part of the self (redefining the self as ‘we’ rather than ‘I’). Through this process, group members perceive similarities between their previously idiosyncratic perceptions, motivations, values, and goals. Moreover,
they are more likely to see each other as valid sources of social influence who are qualified to provide valid information about identity-relevant features of social reality (Turner, 1987, 1991). For example, if membership of Company X becomes a salient social self-category for a particular employee, they should see other members of that company as important sources of information about work-related activity and turn to them for advice and guidance.

As well as this, when people who define themselves in terms of the same social identity disagree, they seek actively to reconcile discordant attitudes and actions. They can do this by redefining their identities, reinterpreting the social world, or engaging in mutual social influence (Turner, 1987; for examples, see Haslam, Turner, Oakes, Reynolds, & Doosje, 2003). In this way, social identity-based perceptual and interactive processes combine to improve communication and produce co-ordinated collective behaviour.

Over the last 15 years these predictions have also been subjected to rigorous empirical testing and they too have received broad support (e.g., for reviews see Ellemers et al., 1999; Spears, Oakes, Ellemers, & Haslam, 1997). And again, much of this work has been conducted in the organizational domain. In these contexts, research has shown that factors which increase social identity salience (e.g., a history of collective interaction, outgroup threat, intergroup comparison or conflict) lead to (a) more homogeneous representations of relevant organizational ingroups (Oakes, Haslam, Morrison, & Grace, 1995), (b) greater trust (e.g., Kramer, Brewer, & Hanna, 1996), (c) better communication (Dovidio et al., 1997; Postmes, 2003; Postmes, Tanis, & de Wit, 2001; Suzuki, 1998), and (d) improved co-operation (Kramer, 1993; Tyler & Blader, 2000; for reviews and discussion, see Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2001; Peteraf & Shanley, 1997).

In essence, then, social identifications can be thought of as particularly potent forms of social capital in the sense implied by social and organizational researchers. As Turner (2001, p. x) puts it, “the fact that individuals are able to act as both individuals and group members is a plus, adding immensely to the sophistication and possibilities of our social relationships”. Yet, to date, little consideration has been given to the way in which this capital can be developed, utilized and sustained through organizational practice. How can the interests and perspectives of individuals be married with those of groups? How might conflict between groups whose members define themselves in terms of distinct identities be productive? How does an organization encourage social identification without making social identities stultifying and all-consuming? In this paper, we attempt to address such questions within a proposed model for actualizing identity resources in organizations.

The ASPIRe model

As suggested above, the theoretical and empirical grounding of social identity and self-categorization principles - in particular, those that rest on the distinction between personal and social identity - are well-established. As a result, these principles are now central to contemporary thinking in social psychology (e.g., see McGarty & Haslam, 1997; E. R. Smith & Mackie, 2000) and are having an increasing impact in the organizational domain (e.g., see Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000; Haslam, 2001; Haslam, van Knippenberg, Platow, & Ellemers, 2003; Hogg & Terry, 2001). In particular, this is because, in both disciplines, they have provided a productive framework for hypothesis generation and organizational analysis (e.g., see Ashforth & Mael, 1989;

Yet, the failure systematically to integrate the insights of the theories within a programme of strategic organizational activity has meant that while the social identity approach points to the benefits (and shortcomings) of a range of organizational practices (e.g., participative decision making, distributed leadership, team-building), its practical implications remain to be both formalized and fully realized. The model proposed in this paper represents an initial attempt to redress this situation by integrating insights from research that has been conducted on a range of core organizational topics within a coherent model of organizational practice. Amongst other things, this points to ways in which social and personal identity resources can be realized and harnessed with a view to improving diversity management, employee well-being, and sustainable productivity.

As can be seen from the schematic representation in Fig. 2, the model has four temporal phases. Each of these takes place in the context of a superordinate identity that all the involved employees recognize and share (e.g., as members of a particular organization or organizational subunit). The phases move from an initial stage that ascertains which social identities employees use to define themselves (AIRing), through intermediate stages in which relevant subgroups and then the organization as a whole establish goals that are relevant to those identities (Sub-Casing, Super-Casing), to a final phase in which organizational planning and goal-setting is informed by the outcomes of the previous two phases (ORGanizing). Subsequent to this, employees’ satisfaction with, and commitment to, the outcomes of the process are monitored as well as the organization’s performance relative to emergent goals. The results of this then provide a basis for future iterations of the ASPIRe process.

The model is underpinned by an assumption that social and personal identities make distinct contributions to organizational life and that opportunities for organizational success and sustainability are maximized when structures allow for the expression and development of concerns and interests associated with each. Accordingly, the ASPIRe model incorporates distinct phases in which personal identities first contribute to the development of a subgroup social identity (in Sub-Casing), and then subgroup social identities contribute to the development of a superordinate organizational identity (in Super-Casing). The model is also based upon an assumption that because individual

Figure 2. Actualizing Social and Personal Identity Resources: The ASPIRe model.
and social differences are an important feature of organizational life (e.g., see Jackson, 1992; Nkomo & Cox, 1996), a viable model also has to allow for the possibility of clashes of opinion at each of these levels. However, in order to harness the creative and innovative potential of such differences, successive phases of the ASPIRe process attempt to encourage the translation of lower-level heterogeneity into higher-order homogeneity. This strategy is consistent with the view that organizational success depends in part on an ability (a) to accommodate individual and group differences within a socially shared theory of the organization and then (b) to use that theory as a basis for action (along lines suggested by Lant & Baum, 1995; Moreland, Argote, & Krishnan, 1996; Weick & Roberts, 1993). In the following sections, we consider in more detail the content and rationale for each of the phases of the model.

**Ascertaining Identity Resources (AIRing)**

A central tenet of the social identity approach is that people’s behaviour is guided by membership of particular personal and social categories only to the extent that they have internalized them as part of their self-concept (Turner, 1982). Psychologically, then, groups are defined not by the demographic features of their members (e.g., as women, managers, university graduates), but by the extent to which any such property forms a basis for shared self-definition (a sense of ‘we-ness’). This means that, psychologically, a group only exists if it provides its members with a sense of shared social identity (e.g., as ‘us women’, ‘us doctors’, ‘us Americans’). By the same token, a sense of individuality (a sense of ‘I-ness’) derives psychologically from a person’s sense that they have a personal identity that is uniquely theirs and that is not shared with other ingroup members (Turner & Onorato, 1999).

This being the case, it follows that if organizations are to capitalize upon people’s social identities in order to enhance organizational outcomes (e.g., along lines suggested by Ellemers et al., 1998; Haslam, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Tyler & Blader, 2000), the group memberships that are involved and mobilized in this process need to be seen by employees as *self-relevant* and *self-defining*. As Jackson (1992) notes, one of the problems associated with attempts to manage diversity in the workplace is that managers often assume that individual employees define themselves in terms of particular group memberships when in fact they do not (see also Brewer, 1995; Markoczy, 1997). Similarly, Peteraf and Shanley (1997, p. 182) observe that “a critical problem with the strategic groups literature to date has been a focus on clustering without attention to the actual relationships among group members”.

Mismatched categorization of this form is particularly likely to occur when employees have a demographic profile that appears to qualify them for membership of a minority or disadvantaged group (e.g., as women, migrants, or aged). In part, this is because social identity theory predicts that when both (a) intergroup boundaries appear to be permeable and (b) individuals have a social mobility belief system, members of minority or low-status groups will seek actively to avoid being categorized in terms of these disadvantaged social identities and will instead attempt to ‘pass’ into the majority or high-status group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 35; see also Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990; Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993).

As a corollary of this point, it is also the case that individuals can self-categorize themselves in terms of group memberships that have no obvious or routinely accessed demographic basis. This is because there are as many possible social self-categorizations as there are dimensions of human differentiation. In principle, then, a
middle-aged Hispanic female production-line worker is as capable of defining herself in terms of her reading ability, her career aspirations, or her political views, as she is of defining herself in terms of any of her distinctive demographic attributes. Consistent with this view, Oakes and colleagues have shown that the critical determinant of self-category salience is not distinctiveness but the capacity for a given social category meaningfully to describe subjectively relevant features of social reality (Oakes & Turner, 1986; Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991; Oakes et al., 1994; see also McGarty, Haslam, Turner, & Oakes, 1993; Reynolds, Turner, & Haslam, 2000).

However, precisely because any individual worker has access to multiple social identities—many of which are not at all relevant to the organization’s core activity—the AllRing process needs to be framed by sensitivity to the organization’s broad agenda. We therefore suggest that this phase is best conducted at the level of the relevant superordinate organizational unit where it is likely to be informed by an existing (relatively undifferentiated or mechanical) organizational identity. This might be achieved, for example, by holding a general meeting of employees or administering an organization-wide survey whose rubric makes explicit reference to organizational identity (e.g., by alluding the organization’s history, its core activities, its purpose and mission, its competitors; cf. Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Lant & Baum, 1995).

Whatever its precise form, the basic goal of AllRing is to identify those self-categorizations that are perceived by individual employees as most relevant to their ability to do their work and to distinguish these from identities that are not perceived to be self-relevant. Relevant identities, we suspect, would differ dramatically not just between organizations whose core business is quite different (e.g., a bank and a car rental company) but also between different organizations with the same core business (e.g., an American bank and a British bank) and even the same business at different times (e.g., a British bank the 1970s and the same bank in the 1990s).

Such variation is predictable and meaningful, since what defines a group will change as a function of the groups with which it compares itself and the broad social context in which it is located (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Haslam & Turner, 1992; Oakes et al., 1994; Turner, 1985). For example, psychologists’ definition of themselves as ‘scientific’ has been found to be more important in contexts where they compare themselves with actors than in those where they compare themselves with physicists (partly because being scientific contributes to a sense of positive distinctiveness in the former case but not the latter; Doosje, Haslam, Spears, Oakes, & Koomen, 1998). Similarly, the meaning of banking (and hence what it means to be a banker), should vary as a function, say, of whether banks are compared with schools or to shops. The core challenge, then, for organizations that want to work with identity resources is to be sensitive to such variation and to avoid prejudgement, unilateral imposition or reification of the identities in question (Reynolds, Eggins, & Haslam, 2001). Amongst other things, this is because (a) sensitivity of this form helps to communicate an organization’s commitment to procedural justice (Tyler & Blader, 2000) and (b) the nature and meaning of employees’ identities should change as the ASPIRe process progresses (Eggins, Reynolds, & Haslam, 2003, Haslam, 2001; see Fig. 1). Indeed, its success depends in part upon the organization’s ability to allow this to happen.

The main outcome associated with the AllRing phase of the ASPIRe process is knowledge of the social identities that employees perceive to be relevant to their work-related activity (and of those that are irrelevant) and of the contours of those identities within the organization (cf. Lant & Baum, 1995; Lau & Murningham, 1998). At the end of this phase, employees and managers should have a sense of the key
groupings that are psychologically meaningful within a particular workforce, how many such groupings there are, and which employees they contain. In an insurance company, for example, the emergent contours may differentiate between people in different areas (claims, investment, sales), between professionals and nonprofessionals, between senior and junior staff, or between office-based and mobile staff. Similarly, in a hospital, groups may be defined in terms professional affiliation (e.g., doctors, nurses, allied health professionals), years of service, or client base (oncology, rehabilitation, paediatrics).

Based on the outcomes of AIRing, a key task to be achieved by the end of this phase is a collective decision about which groups need to form the basis of the next phase of the ASPIRe process. In a manner consistent with self-categorization theory's principles of comparative and normative fit (Oakes, 1987; Oakes et al., 1994; Turner, 1985), the objective here is to divide the superordinate organizational unit up into meaningfully distinct subcategories so as both (a) to maximize the perceived differences between the groupings and (b) to minimize the differences within them. For example, looking at the hypothetical company represented schematically in Fig. 3, it can be seen that it makes sense for this to be divided into subgroups on the basis of work domain (distinguishing between employees in marketing, service, and R&D areas) rather than

![Sub-groups based on work domain](image)

![Sub-groups based on nature of employment](image)

**Figure 3.** Comparative fit of two different bases for identifying subgroups in a hypothetical company. Different employees are identified by different letters. Shading reflects levels of subjectively perceived similarity between employees on dimensions most relevant to work-related activity in the organization (so that two people with the same form of shading perceive themselves to be very similar to each other and to be very different from people with other forms of shading). MCR = mean intergroup difference/mean intragroup difference (with similarly shaded others coded as 0 and differently shaded others coded as 1). Following the metacontrast principle, it can be seen that, in this example, a division into subgroups based on work domain (Marketing, Service, R&D) is more fitting than one based on nature of employment (Permanent, Contract, Casual).
on the basis of nature of employment (distinguishing between permanent, contract, and casual employees). This is because the former division is associated with a higher metacontrast ratio (MCR) of perceived intergroup differences to perceived intragroup differences (Turner, 1985; see also Campbell, 1958).

Illustrative of this process and its outcomes, we recently conducted a survey with employees of a large firm of electrical contractors in England (identified by the pseudonym ElectriCon), in order to identify which differences between people in the organization were forming the basis of work-related social identities (Maple, Haslam, Reynolds, & Eggins, 2002). In related tasks, employees were first asked to identify whether people in the organization were different on each of 18 dimensions (e.g., age, years of employment, sex, salary, education level), and then to identify which of these dimensions of difference had the greatest impact on their working lives.

Responses to the first task were factor-analysed, and this procedure identified six factors that we labelled status (explaining 20.2% of variance), ethnicity (13.5%), age (8.6%), education (7.4%), cronyism (6.8%), and work area (5.6%). Subsequent analysis of the frequency with which the key items contributing to these factors were selected as having an impact on work activities indicated that status was by far the most important factor (an item contributing to this factor was seen as the most important basis of difference by 55% of employees). Moreover, this was the only factor that was correlated with organizational identification in the sample as a whole ($r = .22$, $p < .05$). On this basis, it seems reasonable to conclude that of all the social and demographic variables that might be used to identify salient subgroupings within ElectriCon, those related to status (e.g., seniority, salary, managerial responsibility) are psychologically most important and hence most worthwhile focusing on in the ASPIRe process.

To summarize some of the above ideas, key arguments relating to the potential benefits of AIRing can be presented in terms of the following hypotheses:

H1.1: Social identities that are identified on the basis of an AIRing process are more likely to be psychologically meaningful for employees than those identified on the basis of demographics.

H1.2: The social identities revealed by AIRing are more likely to determine employees’ actual behaviour than those identified on a demographic basis.

H1.3: Organizational planning and development that take account of the social identities revealed by AIRing are more likely to be (and be perceived to be) worthwhile and fruitful than those based on demographic analysis.

Subgroup caucusing (Sub-Casing)

Having made a decision about the basis on which the focal organizational unit should be divided, the next phase of the ASPIRe process involves providing a separate forum for independent subgroup caucusing. Here, each of the subgroups identified at the end of the AIRing phase engages in internal discussion and debate. This has a threefold purpose. First, it should allow subgroup members to identify and agree upon shared goals which will allow them to perform their work better. Second, it should help identify structural and other barriers which obstruct the achievement of these goals but which might be surmounted. Third, it should contribute to the development of a

---

1As we see it, ASPIRe is most likely to be successful where it is implemented and monitored by (or at least in collaboration with) human resources personnel with on-the-ground knowledge of, and commitment to, the organization in question. This is because, as well as commitment to workplace democracy, it requires sensitivity to local organizational features and involves long-term monitoring of outcomes.
shared identity which is relevant to these goals and which subgroup members will internalize and carry over into (and beyond) subsequent stages of the ASPIRe process.

These ideas about the importance of procedures in which organizations develop collective strategies that build upon explicit recognition of subgroup difference have recently been developed and tested more rigorously by Eggins and colleagues in experimental studies that examine responses to negotiated outcomes under conditions where groups are or are not given an opportunity to engage in subgroup caucusing before coming together as a superordinate group (Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2002; Eggins, Haslam, & Ryan, 2000).

Consistent with the ASPIRe model, far more positive outcomes were observed in these studies where the opportunity to caucus was provided. For example, in Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds (2002) first experiment, groups containing two men and two women were asked to negotiate a policy on the treatment of men in higher education. Prior to this, they were given the opportunity to caucus in two-person groups containing either two members of the same sex or one man and one woman. In the former condition - which provided an opportunity for caucusing in terms of a social identity relevant to the gender issue at hand - group members (a) had a stronger sense of gender-based subgroup identity (Ms on 7-point scales, from 1 to 7]=5.60, 5.13, respectively; p<.05), (b) had a greater expectation of subgroup consensus (Ms=5.33, 4.87, respectively; p<.05), (c) felt that group members worked better together (Ms=6.35, 5.96, respectively; p<.05), and (d) found it easier to agree (Ms=6.33, 5.89, respectively; p<.05). These and other findings (e.g., Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2002, experiment 2) confirm the point that subgroup caucusing enables subgroups to develop and express their identity in an environment in which they feel comfortable and where they find negotiation and decision-making easy - rather than heavy-going.

The general process that is envisioned in this phase of activity is one that we have referred to elsewhere as group consensualization (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, & Reynolds, 1998; see also Turner, 1991). Specifically, because the broad context for Sub-Casing is intergroup (with each group aware that they are one of many engaging in this activity), it follows from social identity and self-categorization theories (e.g., Turner, 1985, 1991) (a) that individual group members should be motivated to develop a shared identity that differentiates their subgroup from others in the organization (Hogg, Turner, & Davidson, 1990), (b) that this process should tend to accentuate distinctive ingroup features leading to polarized self-representation and goals (Turner, Wetherell, & Hogg, 1989), and (c) that group members should be motivated to engage in mutual social influence so that they strive to agree upon this polarized identity and these goals (Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds, & Turner, 1999).

In important ways, this phase of the process is akin to the broad process of team-building through which a collection of individuals identify distinctive values, interests, and goals that they share but also work out ways of developing a shared theory of their ingroup that accommodates their idiosyncratic personal identities (Moreland et al., 1996). In effect, then, the process contributes to the development of a low-level organic social identity on which basis group members come to trust each other and communicate more effectively (Haslam, 2001). At the same time, though, the fact that the evolution of this identity is not directly controlled by management allows greater freedom to explore the creative outcomes of the consensualization process and to identify (and attempt to correct) limitations of current organizational functioning without fear of personal reprisal. In this regard, a critical feature of Sub-Casing is that by being group-based, it allows individuals to give voice to those of their values and
concerns that are shared with others and to do so in a supportive rather than an intimidatory environment (Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2002). And because the forum serves to identify goals which are associated with salient dimensions of employees’ self-concepts, they should (a) be more involved in the process (Lewin, 1956; Shadur, Kienzle, & Rodwell, 1999; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000), (b) feel more respected by the organization (Smith & Tyler, 1997; Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2000), and (c) be more committed to the goals that are agreed upon (Ellemers et al., 1998; Wegge, 2000).

From management’s perspective, of course, one potential concern with this phase is that the polarized and consensualized identities and goals that emerge as a result of the Sub-Casing process may be construed as dangerously conflictual and extreme. In our ElectriCon case, for example, if relations between the groups are insecure (i.e., perceived to be illegitimate and unstable), it may be the case that to conduct Sub-Casing would lead their members to display forms of ingroup favouritism and outgroup derogation (cf. Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Here, those in the high-status group might perceive members of the low-status group to be indolent and underskilled, while its members in turn would be seen by those in the low-status group as overpaid and arrogant. To the extent that these perceptions are promoted by Sub-Casing, they could clearly be quite damaging.

Similar concerns are reflected in Janis’s (1982) groupthink model, which focuses on the capacity for highly cohesive groups to develop and pursue radical (and seemingly irrational) goals when ‘the we-feeling of solidarity’ runs too high (p. vii). For this reason, Stein (1982) counsels that:

Managers need . . . to be aware that their subordinates might well profit from the facilitating effects of group membership. At the same time, however, they need to be aware of steamroller tactics, in which the group may become overstimulated and oversell itself.

(p. 146)

Indeed, sensitivity to this point accounts for the fact that many organizations strive to develop participatory practices that are tightly controlled or nominal and where the rhetoric of empowerment fails to match the psychological reality (Harley, 1999; Kelly & Kelly, 1991; Mintzberg, 1996).

We believe that these various concerns would be more serious, however, if Sub-Casing were to occur at the end of the ASPIRe process and not to be framed by an overarching superordinate identity. Indeed, where no superordinate identity is available to inform Sub-Casing (and subsequent phases of the ASPIRe process), the dangers associated with proceeding beyond the AIRing phase may justify the postponement of Sub-Casing until such time as a superordinate identity has emerged or can be developed. However, where this superordinate identity is available, and can be used as a basis for subsequent phases of the ASPIRe process, this should mean that during Sub-Casing, organizations are able effectively to harness the creative potential of groups (of the form which recent analysis confirms to be present in groupthink; e.g., Turner & Pratkanis, 1998) without unmediated translation of its outcomes into organizational policy. Indeed, we would argue that without processes of this form (which allow for the emergence of conflicting social identities and goals), there is a far greater risk that the organization as a whole will display adverse symptoms of groupthink (in the form, for example, of generalized conformity, mindguarding, and excessive concurrence-seeking; e.g., see Locke et al., 2001). Moreover, evidence from a range of studies (e.g., Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2002; Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Morley & Stephenson, 1979; Haslam & Reicher, 2002; Tyler & Blader, 2000) suggests that unless
they allow for genuine collective participation and representation of the form envisaged here, employees are likely to feel alienated by strategic planning and organizational change programmes and are likely to react to them with cynicism and disengagement rather than enthusiasm and commitment (Jetten, O’Brien, & Trindall, 2002; Jetten, Duck, Terry, & O’Brien, 2002; King & Anderson, 1995; Mintzberg, 1996; Terry, Carey, & Callan, 2001; Wanous, Reichers, & Austin, 2000).

Again, then, the potential advantages of Sub-Casing can be summarized in the following hypotheses:

H2.1: Members of the subgroups within an organization that participate in Sub-Casing should show a better awareness of (a) shared subgroup goals, (b) barriers to subgroup goal achievement, and (c) their organic subgroup identity than those that do not.

H2.2: Members of subgroups that participate in Sub-Casing should perceive themselves to be more respected and more empowered, and the organization to be more just, than those that do not.

H2.3: Within subgroups that participate in Sub-Casing, there should be evidence of (a) more trust, (b) superior communication, (c) more enthusiasm, and (d) more creativity than within subgroups that do not go through this process.

**Superordinate consensualizing (Super-Casing)**

All in all, then, the consensualization of subgroup goals has the threefold attraction of optimizing an organization’s potential for social engagement, social creativity, and social correction. However, at the end of Sub-Casing, this potential will be reflected in goals that are not only diverse but also quite polarized. The next phase of the ASPIRe process involves providing a common organizational forum that brings together the different subgroups (or multiple representatives of each of them) to engage in further discussion and debate. This forum again has three main purposes that are similar to those associated with Sub-Casing – although, here, contributions should be informed more by the outcomes of the previous phase and the subgroup identities it consolidated and less by personal identities. First, it should allow employees in general to identify and agree upon shared goals which will allow them to improve their work. Second, it should help them to identify structural and other barriers which obstruct the achievement of these goals but which might be surmounted. And third, these activities should contribute to the development of a shared organizational identity which is relevant to these goals and which subgroup members internalize and carry over beyond the ASPIRe process. Importantly though, this social identity should differ from that which informed the initial AIRing phase in so far as it builds upon and explicitly recognizes the subgroup identities that emerged during Sub-Casing.

In this way, while the organizational identity that underpinned the AIRing phase may have been relatively mechanical (in the sense that its content incorporated an undifferentiated view of group membership; Durkheim, 1933; Haslam, 2001), the organizational identity that emerges in Super-Casing needs to be organic. That is, its content needs to define the superordinate group in a way that allows for, and incorporates, subgroup difference. Indeed, this process of organizational identity change is one of the main hallmarks of the ASPIRe process: for such change is simultaneously both brought about by the process and the basis of its efficacy.

Examples of organic identities of this form are fairly easy to find. Most obviously, they are apparent in multi-ethnic societies that work to develop an ideology of multiculturism (or biculturalism), which celebrates and provides a place for people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Such a philosophy can be contrasted with
ideologies of assimilation (where only a single mechanical identity is promoted) and separatism (in which two distinct identities are promoted; Berry, 1984, 1991; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a,b). Significantly, too, research by Huo, Smith, Tyler, and Lind (1994) and Jetten, O’Brien, & Trindall (2002) suggests that of these three ideologies, multiculturalism is most likely to be associated with an ability to deal satisfactorily with conflict and change in the workplace - largely because it steers a delicate course between conflict escalation (produced by separatism) and conflict avoidance (produced by assimilation).

The nature of the identity changes that occur between Sub-Casing and Super-Casing is represented schematically in Fig. 4. Here, it can be seen that the main goal of Super-Casing is to move towards a situation in which employees define themselves in terms of a relatively complex superordinate identity (as members of the focal organizational unit), but are simultaneously aware of the subgroup memberships from which that identity has been forged. In effect, this involves the resolution of what Huczynski and Buchanan (2001, p. 9) identify as the fundamental organizational dilemma and represents a recasting of insights first contained in Blake and Mouton’s (1964) dual concern model of negotiation, in which the key to long-term success was found to lie in parties’ capacity to marry a high level of concern for their own position and outcomes with high concern for the position and outcomes of the other party (see also Haslam, 2001, pp. 190–194; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). In research (e.g., see Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993), each of the other three combinations of high and low concern has been found to have clear limitations as an end-point in the negotiation process: concern simply for the other party (akin to assimilation) leads to collusive outcomes, which ultimately contribute to resentment and a feeling of having been ‘sold out’; concern only for one’s own party (akin to separatism) serves primarily to exacerbate conflict; and low concern for both parties leads to inaction. Dual concern, however, is
typically associated with a process of integrative problem-solving, in which parties are sensitive to their own needs and interests but strive to develop creative ('win–win') solutions that are also compatible with the values and interests of the other party and motivated by the need to reach a higher-order agreement.

Essentially, the same process as this is envisaged in the ASPIRe process. However, the key practical development here is that the model specifies temporal sequencing procedures that help to create the appropriate climate for an organic organizational identity to develop. Specifically, the model builds upon pioneering work by Douglas (1957) and work in the social identity tradition by Morley and Stephenson (1979) and Stephenson (1981, 1984), which suggests that superordinate identities of this form are most likely to develop and to be internalized by all subgroups in organizations where those subgroups have first had the opportunity to explore their differences through effective caucusing (as provided in Sub-Casing; see also Olekalns, Smith, & Walsh, 1996; Pruitt, Peirce, Zubek, McGillicuddy, & Welton, 1993).

Again, these ideas have received support in empirical research reported by Eggins and colleagues in which groups are or are not given an opportunity to engage in subgroup caucusing before coming together as a superordinate group (Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2000, 2002). Following on from the data reported in the previous section, Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds (2002, experiment 1) found that the positive outcomes associated with subgroup caucusing carried over to a subsequent phase in which members of the subgroups came together to negotiate a collective strategy. Compared with groups that had not participated in subgroup caucusing, members of groups that had participated in such activity retained (a) a stronger sense of gender-based subgroup identity (Ms [on 7-point scales, from 1 to 7] = 5.54, 4.95, respectively; \( p < .05 \)) and (b) a greater expectation of subgroup consensus (Ms = 5.33, 4.87, respectively; \( p < .05 \)). However, they also (c) felt that the people involved in this phase of negotiation worked better together (Ms = 6.35, 5.96, respectively; \( p < .05 \)) and (d) were less inclined to see the other subgroup as biased (Ms = 2.19, 2.80, respectively; \( p < .05 \)).

In a follow-up study, Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds (2002, experiment 2) also found that when groups had participated in Sub-Casing prior to Super-Casing, they (e) enjoyed negotiation more (Ms = 3.52, 3.20, respectively; \( p < .05 \)) and (f) felt that their input was more valued (Ms = 3.31, 3.02, respectively; \( p < .05 \)). These and other findings suggest that, where Sub-Casing precedes Super-Casing, group members are likely to feel more comfortable with negotiation and decision-making processes, less hostile to the other parties engaged in them, and more valued. Moreover, in both these studies, mediational analysis provided support for the hypothesis that the relationship between experimental condition (Sub-Casing, no Sub-Casing) and group functioning was mediated by increased identification at the subgroup level. In other words, following Sub-Casing, groups worked better at the Super-Casing phase because Sub-Casing had allowed them to develop relevant subgroup identities.

From the standpoint of self-categorization theory (e.g., Turner, 1987), the main intellectual dividends associated with this strategy can be seen to flow (a) from the capacity for the two Casing phases to provide an opportunity for full expression of the personal and collective self and (b) from the creative tension that the two phases combine to create. Specifically, because employees define themselves at multiple levels (as individuals, as subgroup members and as members of a superordinate organizational unit), and self-definition at each of these levels has distinct consequences (e.g., van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000), the Casing process works by providing a forum in which the implications and demands of all these levels of self-categorization can be
explored. At the same time, though, in both phases, the operative social identity (subgroup in Sub-Casing and superordinate in Super-Casing) provides employees with the psychological motivation to reconcile inconsistencies between adjacent levels of self-categorization (Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2000; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). That is, in Sub-Casing self-categorization as a subgroup member motivates employees to develop a shared working understanding of that subgroup that accommodates individual differences (e.g., in competency and expertise), and in Super-Casing, self-categorization as an organizational member motivates employees to develop a shared working understanding of the organization that accommodates subgroup differences. In each case, then, the emergence of a more inclusive identity stimulates creativity and helps overcome cognitive inertia (Hodgkinson, 1997) by (a) encouraging a complex and elaborated cognitive understanding of the organization (Hodgkinson, 2001a,b), and (b) creating intellectual and material challenges that would not otherwise exist (Turner, 1991). Importantly too, this identity also brings with it new collective goals and suggests new individual and group activities. The objective of the final phase of the ASPIRe process is to establish which of these are viable and worth pursuing.

As with previous phases, the theorized benefits of Super-Casing can be summarized in the following hypotheses:

H3.1: Members of an organization that participate (or are represented) in Super-Casing (following Sub-Casing) should show a better awareness of (a) shared organizational goals, (b) barriers to organizational goal achievement, and (c) the organic nature of the organization’s identity than those that do not.

H3.2: Members of an organization that participate (or are represented) in Super-Casing (following Sub-Casing) should perceive themselves to be more respected and more empowered, and the organization (and its decisions) to be more just than those that do not.

H3.3: Within organizations whose members participate (or are represented) in Super-Casing (following Sub-Casing), there should be evidence of (a) more trust, (b) superior communication, (c) more enthusiasm, and (d) more creativity than within organizations that do not go through this process.

**Organic goal-setting (ORGanizing)**

The three phases outlined above incorporate procedures that seek to empower employees by allowing them to act in terms of self-determined personal and social identities (Reynolds & Platow, 2003). In order for this to happen, of course, the process needs to be set in train by personnel who are familiar with the logic and details of the model (information to which all participants should have access). Nevertheless, although managers will be part of subgroups (or may form a subgroup of their own), direct management control of the specific content of these phases should be minimal. Again, this is because the benefits of the model derive from its capacity to allow employees collectively to question and develop alternatives to existing organizational arrangements (arrangements that management may be quite attached to (for a range of reasons). Direct management intervention is counselled against, then, because in contrast to many popular management models (e.g., see Thompson & Warhurst, 1998), the goal of the ASPIRe model is not simply to reinforce managers’ prejudices by telling them what they already know – but instead to promote bottom-up organizational creativity.

Having said that, at the end of the Super-Casing phase, there are clearly strategic decisions that need to be made relating to the direction in which the organization as a whole is to develop. It is at this stage that the issue of leadership becomes more
important as decision-makers must now play a key role in determining how the organization as a whole can capitalize on the outcomes of AIRing and Casing phases through a process that we refer to as organic goal setting (ORGanizing). This process focuses on evaluating the appropriateness for the organization of the superordinate goals that emerged from Super-Casing. This decision needs to be informed by awareness of the identity and other resources available to the organization and of the obstacles that stand (and in the Casing phases were perceived to stand) in the way of goal achievement.

Following the basic tenets of goal-setting theory (e.g., Locke & Latham, 1990), it is important that the goals decided upon here are both specific and reasonably hard to achieve. Although goal-setting theory has traditionally defined the individual as the main unit of organizational analysis (and intervention), the relevance of these principles to group-level activities has been confirmed in recent research by Wegge and colleagues (Wegge, 2000; Wegge & Haslam, 2003; Wegge & Kleinbeck, 1996). In this research, it is found that groups generally perform significantly better on brainstorming tasks where they are given specific goals (e.g., to improve upon previous performance by a certain amount) rather than non-specific goals (to ‘do your best’; see also O’Leary-Kelly, Martocchio, & Frink, 1994). For example, Wegge and Haslam (2003) and Haslam, Egging, and Reynolds (2002) found that, compared with baseline testing (in which groups on average identified 19.6 uses for familiar objects), groups that were given goals to improve by 20–40% in a second phase of testing generated 4.0 more solutions, while those without such goals generated only 0.5 more solutions (p < .01). In a third phase of testing (where task fatigue might be expected to impact on performance) goals were doubled (with groups required to improve by 40–80% on their baseline performance). Here, groups with goals generated 2.7 more suggestions than baseline, while those without goals generated 2.6 fewer suggestions, $F(1, 70) = 10.30, p < .01$.

Moreover, consistent with the basic tenets of the social identity approach (and the rationale for previous phases of the ASPIRe process), this research also suggests that, like leadership itself, group goal-setting is most likely to be effective where members of the relevant organizational unit are encouraged to participate in the process and feel collectively represented by it (Turner & Haslam, 2001). Again, we expect this to be the case because it enhances feelings of procedural justice (and an associated sense of respect) and increases self-involvement and commitment (e.g., Egginias, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2002; Ellemers et al., 1998; Tyler & Blader, 2000).

Consistent with this idea, in the study discussed above, Wegge and Haslam (2003; Haslam et al., 2002) found that as goals became progressively more difficult over the second and third phases of testing, the performance of groups who were simply given goals by the experimenter started to decline, while that of groups who had developed their own goals continued to improve. In Phase 2 (where the goals were to improve by 20–40%), groups with experimenter-set goals generated 3.6 more suggestions, and those with self-set goals generated 4.3 more suggestions ($p > .5$), but in Phase 3 (where goals were to improve by 40–80%), groups with experimenter-set goals generated only 0.1 more suggestions, while those with self-set goals generated 5.4 more suggestions ($p < .02$). On the basis of these findings, it appears that when the going gets tough, the goals required to get groups going need to be ones in which they have some sense of ownership.

For this reason, it is important that even though ORGanizing can be defined as a executive activity, employees should continue to be (and feel) involved in this
phase. As with the Super-Casing process, in order to preserve (and signal) ongoing commitment to the identities that were actualized in previous phases, it is thus recommended that, at the very least, it involve multiple representatives from various parties, and preferably those individuals who emerged from previous phases as subgroup representatives or leaders (i.e., prototypical subgroup members; Haslam & Platow, 2001a,b; Turner, 1991).

However, even if this does not occur, it is expected that through their own involvement in AIRing and Casing, leaders will have come to embrace a different understanding of the organization from that which they held previously (for related arguments, see Scott & Lane, 2000). In particular, this change should have been brought about through self-stereotyping in terms of a superordinate identity whose normative content is more complex and has a greater respect for the contribution of subgroups to the organization as whole (cf. Hodgkinson, 2001b). Indeed, in itself, this may constitute one of the most important contributions of the whole ASPIRe process, for, by creating identity-based bonds between leaders and followers (where previously there may only have been social categorical division), it should help to create a new identity resource from which the whole organization stands to prosper (Haslam & Platow, 2001a; Turner & Haslam, 2001).

Of course, whether or not the ASPIRe process does prove to be worthwhile is an empirical question, and (again in contrast to the greater body of contemporary management theory; Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 1997: Mintzberg, 1996), we are certainly not inviting theorists or practitioners to commit themselves to the model as an article of blind faith. Accordingly, the capacity of the organization to meet those goals that emerge from the ORGanizing process needs to be monitored closely, together with the contribution that the ASPIRe process makes to the organization’s overall culture and performance. Such monitoring should also be as broad-based as possible; focusing on implications for both economic and social capital. In particular, attempts should be made to assess employees’ satisfaction with, and commitment to, the identities and goals associated with ORGanizing. As well as helping to assess the viability and utility of the model, activity of this form is needed in order to monitor changes in the underlying identity resources of the organization (changes that inevitably will occur in response to changing social circumstances; Turner & Haslam, 2001) so that, if and when necessary, the ASPIRe process can be conducted anew.

The potential benefits of ORGanizing - which, in many ways, summarize the proposed merits of the ASPIRe model as a whole - can be stated in the following hypotheses:

**H4.1:** Members of organizations that participate (or are represented) in ORGanizing (following Sub-Casing and Super-Casing) are more likely (a) to have a sense of ownership of the organization’s decisions, goals, and plans, and (b) to perceive them to be fair and (c) appropriate, than those that do not.

**H4.2:** Members of organizations that participate (or are represented) in ORGanizing (following Sub-Casing and Super-Casing) are more likely (a) to be committed to the organization’s decisions, goals, and plans, and (b) to use them as a guide for their own action, than those that do not.

---

2A further purpose of the AIRing process is to establish that employees' identification with the superordinate organization is sufficiently high to warrant continuing with the ASPIRe process. As noted below, this is because in the absence of superordinate identification, subsequent phases of the process could prove counter-productive. In the ElectriCon case, despite the fact that employees were sensitive to differences in status, it appeared that identification with the organization as a whole was sufficiently high to justify proceeding to the Sub-Casing phase (3.39 on a scale from 1 to 5).
H4.3: Organizations that engage in ORGanizing (following Sub-Casing and Super-Casing) are more likely to be (a) harmonious, (b) creative, and (c) productive than those that do not.

**Implications of the model and points of contact with other approaches**

There are a number of novel and distinctive features of the ASPIRe model that derive from the fact that it attempts to translate social identity and self-categorization principles into a logical sequence of organizational activities. However, in presenting any new theoretical or practical model, it is usually a mistake to suggest that its contribution and insights are entirely original and its vision thoroughly iconoclastic. Accordingly, in the present case, it is important to note that there are significant points of contact between our model and other influential approaches to organizational practice. Indeed, as we see it, much of the model's appeal derives from its ability (with some recasting) to incorporate and lend coherence to insights from research and practice across a range of areas.

At a general level, then, the model is consistent with growing recognition of the need for organization and leadership practices that empower workers and allow them a level of autonomy and self-determination in the workplace (e.g., Kanter, 1979; Pfeffer, 1981, 1992), thereby demonstrating a commitment to principles of procedural justice that help instil a sense of pride and respect (Smith, Tyler, Huo, Ortiz, & Lind, 1998; Tyler & Blader, 2000). This call is reflected in practices such as participative decision-making (PDM; Yukl, 1989; see also Lewin, 1956; Morris, Hulbert, & Abrams, 2000), participative group goal-setting (PGGS; Wegge, 2000; Wegge & Kleinbeck, 1996) and total quality management (TQM; Lawler, Mohrman, & Ledford, 1992). The ASPIRe model is clearly consistent with these trends (associated, for example, with the increased use of delphi groups and quality circles in the workplace; Drainke & Kossen, 1998), in so far as it places an emphasis on employees' involvement in organizational decision-making and goal-setting, and places their own personal and social identities at the centre of this process.

At the same time, though, it is also the case that - successful as self-management processes have been in increasing organizational productivity and profit - critics of such developments point to the increasing human cost of such practices (e.g., Harley, 1999; Parker, 1993; Rees & Rodley, 1995; Sewell & Wilkinson, 1992). In particular, criticism centres on the fact that, in line with Mayo's (1949) human relations model, empowerment often involves conformity to the norms of an all-consuming monolithic team or organizational identity that limits employees' opportunity to criticize the superordinate unit or collectively pursue alternative courses of action. This can have a range of negative consequences, including the stifling of creativity, a tendency to compromise rather than challenge, and the emergence of an acquiescent organizational culture (cf. Janis, 1982). Such criticism lies at the heart of Locke's objection to the broad concept of teamwork and social capital (Locke, 1999; Locke et al., 2001) and was the essence of early parodies of human relations ideals which equated its prescriptions for organizational life with a loss of (personal) identity (notably Whyte, 1960). Consistent with such concerns, evidence from some of our own recent research suggests that social identification of this form has a clear propensity to induce disenchantment and burnout as employees strive to live up to demanding group norms (e.g., to do more work with fewer resources) and, in the process exclude other potential avenues for (collective) self-actualization (e.g., Haslam, Powell, & Turner, 2000).

In this regard, a significant feature of the ASPIRe model is that it attempts to counteract the negative consequences of superordinate identities by ensuring that they
are explicitly premised upon lower-level group memberships (which themselves provide an opportunity for the personal identities of employees to be expressed and affirmed). As we have already observed, a strategy of this form was first countenanced in the pioneering intergroup work of Douglas (1957) and formed the basis of Morley and Stephenson’s (1979) and Stephenson’s (1981, 1984) social identity model of negotiation. This approach is also consistent with the insights of the dual concern model (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986) in which the success of any negotiation process is seen to depend on an ability to take the perspective of, and show concern for, both self and other (and which suggests a framework conceptually similar to that presented in Figure 4).

In a similar vein, the ASPIRe model is consistent with the model of conflict resolution recently advocated by proponents of dual identity theory (e.g., Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Gaertner, Rust, Dovidio, Bachman, & Anastasio, 1996; Gonzalez & Brown, 1999; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Hornsey & Hogg, 1999, 2000a,b). Contrary to early assertions that conflict was best managed by encouraging participants to act purely in terms of (a) personal identities (Brewer & Miller, 1984), (b) distinct social identities (Hewstone & Brown, 1986), or (c) a shared superordinate identity (Gaertner et al., 1993), this suggests that the most successful forms of conflict management involve simultaneous recognition of both the distinct social identities that give rise to conflict (e.g., between management and unions) and an overarching superordinate identity (e.g., as employees of the same company).

In relation to this work, the distinct contribution of the ASPIRe model (and of the empirical work that supports it, e.g., Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2003; Eggins, Haslam, & Ryan, 2000; Haslam & Reicher, 2002; Reynolds, Haslam, Turner, Eggins, & Ryan, 2000) is that it translates these insights into a practical organizational programme whose relevance is not restricted to conflict management. Part of this broader relevance derives from the fact that we see the utility of dual-identity strategies as a specific illustration of the benefits of a broad organizational (and social) philosophy that we have termed organic pluralism (Eggins et al., 2003; Haslam, 2001; Haslam et al., 2000). This suggests that a range of positive organizational outcomes flow from a superordinate organizational identity that recognizes, accommodates, and encourages subgroup identities that reflect the shared self-determined interests and aspirations of employees. These include the productivity dividends associated with the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner et al., 1993) but also the encouragement of creativity, error rectification, and collective resistance to injustice (Veenstra & Haslam, 2000). Creativity is increased because shared superordinate social identification motivates employees to find novel ways of translating different subgroup goals into common organizational activity (as in Super-Casing; van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003); error and injustice are more likely to be addressed because, where these are detected, individuals are not forced to combat them alone (a prospect that often leads individuals to capitulate; Asch, 1951) but can turn to others for intellectual, emotional, and practical support. In this way, organic pluralism is intended to engender the sense (and reality) of authentic social and organizational choice (cf. Kekes, 1993).

By capitalizing on inherent diversity (and resisting a monocultural model of the organization), the ASPIRe model therefore helps to ensure that productivity is sustainable and enduring rather than short-lived. In this, the model is envisaged as a tool that has the capacity to enhance diversity management (Reynolds et al., 2000) but which can also contribute to the management of change, industrial relations, and employee
well-being. And in these various roles, it should prove to be just as useful where there is a marked absence of conflict (and where there may be a high level of organizational torpor or uncritical compliance) as it does when conflict and discontent abound.

This suggestion is itself consistent with increasing recognition of the fact that, in principle, industrial harmony is not necessarily to be preferred to industrial conflict (De Dreu, Harinck, & Van Vianen, 1999; Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds 2002; Kelly & Kelly, 1992; Stephenson, 1981, 1984; van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003; Worchel, Coutant-Sassic, & Wong, 1993; for earlier statements to this effect, see Cooley, 1918; Coser, 1956; Katz, 1964; Kerr, 1954; Tannenbaum, 1965). This is partly because conflict and co-operation are effectively two sides of the same coin but also because a complete lack of conflict is typically a sign of apathy, disengagement, and entropy. A key feature of the ASPIRe model is thus that it provides a mechanism for organizations to move away from these states without precipitating anarchy or destructive conflict of the form that can flow from simple (nonorganic) pluralism (e.g., see Berry, 1984).

Finally, it is worth noting that the ASPIRe model is also consistent with a number of contemporary models of leadership. In particular, it accords with Deal and Kennedy’s (1982) analysis of the role that symbolic management plays in creating cultures that recognize and celebrate the contribution that distinct subgroups and cultures make to an organization (Reynolds et al., 2001). These authors argue that:

Rather than being afraid of subcultures pulling apart, a symbolic manager will seek to strengthen each subculture as an effective cabal within the overall culture [and] will generally endorse the subculture’s existence and meaning within the larger culture. (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 153).

And they add:

The symbolic manager will go out of his or her way to point out how each subculture brings unique strengths and values to the overall culture and how the subcultures add value. Thus the whole experience of subculture clash will be used as a forum for enriching the culture and bonding the groups together.

Such arguments are clearly compatible with the general model we have outlined and also with general recommendations that effective organizational leadership needs to centre around the affirmation rather than negation of the social identities in terms of which employees define themselves (Haslam & Platow, 2001a,b; see also Adair, 1983). They are broadly consistent, too, with House’s (1971) path-goal theory, which suggests that the key to effective leadership lies in an ability to identify employees’ personal goals and to provide paths for them to achieve these goals that are consistent with, and themselves contribute to, the superordinate goals of the organization. Significantly, though, the ASPIRe model suggests not only that work goals are personal (in the sense of being unique to the individual), but that many are also shared with other subgroup members. Accordingly, we see the ASPIRe model as an extension of House’s theory (along lines suggested by House himself; see House, 1996), which suggests that, beyond the recognition of personal goals, it is important (and often much more practical; Tyler, 1999) for leaders to display commitment to a process that acknowledges and respects subgroup goals (together with the distinct identities that underpin them) and reconciles these with those of the organization.

Conclusion

The model of organizational practice proposed in this paper represents an initial attempt to demonstrate how social and personal identity resources might be assessed
and utilized by organizations in an attempt to measure and make the most of their social capital. Key features of the model are that it assumes (a) that identities must be accepted as self-relevant and self-defining by employees rather than imposed upon them (e.g., on the basis of demography), (b) that, where they make an important contribution to employees’ self-concept, organizations must allow subgroup identities to be voiced and to have an impact on higher-level decisions, and (c) that a range of positive organizational outcomes are contingent upon an ability to develop shared goals and a shared identity that are premised upon lower-level goals relevant to the personal and subgroup identities of employees.

In so far as this model is premised upon the capacity, and need, for organizational outcomes to be collectively self-determined, it clearly conflicts with Taylorist wisdom, which asserts that organizational efficacy is contingent upon managers’ ‘right to manage’ (e.g., Taylor, 1911). Along related lines, it also conflicts with models of top-down strategic planning that proliferate in the management literature and set management activities apart both from general organizational operations and from the general workforce (Mintzberg, 1990; Mintzberg & Lampel, 1999). However, it challenges the human relations view that organizations are most effective when employees simply define themselves in terms of a single organizational or team identity (e.g., Mayo, 1933, 1949; see also Gaertner et al., 1993, 1996).

As we see it, all of the above models are limited by the fact that they engender either compliance (under [neo-]Taylorism) or conformity (under the common ingroup model) that limits the possibility for creative alternatives to the status quo (Turner & Oakes, 1997), rectification of collective errors (Locke et al., 2001) or genuine empowerment in terms of self-relevant subgroup identities (Harley, 1999). Consistent with the tenets of organic pluralism, the major attraction of the present model is therefore that it overcomes the limitations of organizational monocultures in which there is a dangerous singularity of perspective and instead points to ways in which diversity, change, and conflict at both individual and group levels can be managed in a manner that contributes to an organization’s vitality and long-term sustainability.

There are, of course, at least three obvious objections to the model. The first is that the model provides a vehicle for group-level dissent and conflict where otherwise an organization might encourage obedience or acquiescence. The second is that the model will be seen as problematic by members of those groups who feel that their interests are already well served either by an ability to exercise managerial prerogative or by the norms and values of all-embracing organizational identities. More generally, then, it can be argued that the model denies the various political realities that necessarily constrain (and in many cases drive) organizational planning and decision-making (Pettigrew, 1973; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974).

Both of these concerns are well founded, reflecting as they do the fact that organizations and organizational life are inherently political and, moreover, that this is often reflected in a conservative orientation that prefers status quo-reinforcing harmony and individualism to more radical alternatives (Pfeffer, 1997; Reicher, 1982; Tajfel, 1978). However, we would argue that far from being blind to the political dynamics of organizations, the ASPIRe model is an overt attempt to recognize and change those dynamics – in particular, by challenging individualistic policies or those which simply reinforce the interests of powerful groups.

A third objection to the model is that while we are aware of a broad body of social psychological research that points to the validity of the assumptions upon which it is based, there is, as yet, little evidence for the validity or utility of the ASPIRe
process in its entirety (although it has been supported by evidence from preliminary experimental tests; Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2002). Nonetheless, largely because the model represents a reasonably elegant synthesis of theoretical and practical primitives, we think that it provides a sensible blueprint for practice and for further empirical work. In this regard, we consider the following to be the most important hypotheses to test in future research:

H5.1: Positive organizational outcomes (on relevant individual and group, attitudinal, and behavioural measures) will be enhanced where organizational planning and development involve social identities that have emerged from an AIRing process rather than from purely demographic analysis.
H5.2: Positive organizational outcomes will be enhanced where subgroup causing involves employee-relevant rather than employee-irrelevant social identities.
H5.3: Positive organizational outcomes will be enhanced where subgroup causing occurs before, rather than after, superordinate consensualization.
H5.4: Positive organizational outcomes will be enhanced where subgroup causng and superordinate consensualization involve, rather than avoid, goal setting.
H5.5: Positive organizational outcomes observed among those who participate in ASPIRe processes will generalize to other organizational observers to the extent that those observers feel that self-relevant social identities have been represented in the process.

Research to test these hypotheses is currently underway (e.g., Eggins, Reynolds & Haslam, 2002; Eggins, Reynolds, Haslam & Veenstra, 2002). The aim here is to combine laboratory-based experimental studies with organization-based intervention studies to gain insights into both the process-based mechanics of ASPIRe and its long-term organizational impact. In particular, several large-scale organizational studies are currently underway in order to investigate the model in its entirety. Working in large public-sector organizations, these aim to take key sectors of an organization through the ASPIRe process, measuring participant attitudes and behaviour as well as overall organizational functioning at key stages during the study. The intention is to use noninvolved sectors (e.g., at different sites) or other similar organizations as controls. Field-based investigations of the model’s efficacy will thus compare groups that have or have not been exposed to particular ASPIRe-related interventions (e.g., as specified under H5.1 to H5.5) to assess the relative importance and utility of each component.

We certainly do not rule out the possibility that the model will need to be modified on the basis of the findings that research and organizational activity generates. Indeed, given that a core implication of the social identity approach is that social and organizational processes are context-dependent and hence that prescriptions for practice need to be context-specific rather than ‘off the peg’ (Turner & Haslam, 2001), we think that the model will always need to be employed with considerable sensitivity to the local organizational environment (e.g., along lines envisaged in the AIRing phase).

However, these caveats notwithstanding, there is clearly a pressing need to formalize the implications of the social identity approach and to translate its social and cognitive insights into useful organizational tools. For this reason, we hope that, at the very least, the present model serves to focus researchers on that goal and to stimulate further advances in this direction.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful for the thoughtful comments of Bill Harley, Craig McGarty, Gerard Hodgkinson, Juergen Wegge, and two anonymous reviewers on earlier versions of this manuscript.
References


*Received 17 July 2001; revised version received 11 April 2002*