The Hive:
Identity Construction within a Coworking Space

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters by Research

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ABSTRACT

The concept of coworking caters to freelancers and entrepreneurs who not only seek a shared office space but also be part of a socially bound group with similar ideas and goals. The aim of providing a space that fosters collaboration, sense of community, enhances creativity and sustains communication within a diverse group of independent professionals. Whilst the concept has flourished over the span of 10 years, little is known of the participants’ experiences within coworking spaces and whether such spaces do deliver what it promises. Based on 3 months of ethnographic work at the Hive, a coworking space that started in 2011, I explored the way these coworkers construct their identities within the space itself. I have identified conflicting perspectives which presented the following coworking archetypes: The Nostalgic, Corporate Identities, The Outsider, Self-imposed Exiles and Collaborative Isolators. These archetypes are troubling in that they do not seem to reflect the intended images and cultural aims of a coworking space.

Key words: Coworking, Culture, Identity, Image, Space, Ethnography
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION
1.1 Background of Research

The concept of work is no longer constricted to the confines of a selected space (e.g. an organization, a building, a cubicle). Instead, professionals now have the freedom to work away from the office, given the advancement of technology; work can now be done through technological tools such as the laptop or mobile device. However, the freedom to work away from the office comes with the price of losing elements of social and emotional attachments to other individuals which leads to isolation, inability to trust, the lack of relationship with others and restricted opportunities for collaboration and networking (Spinuzzi 2012). It is due to these reasons that these professionals now seek alternative spaces where they can work together. Therefore, the changes in technology, space needs, and attitudes towards the traditional work environment have combined to create a new type of office space usage called *Coworking*.

The emphasis of values such as collaboration, community, diversity, sustainability, openness and accessibility are strongly emphasised within the coworking community (Butcher 2013; Kwiatkowski & Buczynski 2011a, 2011b; Spinuzzi 2012; Stumpf 2013). Coworking management encourages social interaction with other coworkers and promote the concept of community building through organized weekly social events. In comparison to a bureaucratic traditional organization, they relinquish the notion of hierarchical management and regulation and control. In other words, they shun from the rigidity and structural regulatory system most bureaucratic organizations place upon their employees (Butcher 2013; Foertsch & Cagno 2013).

An individual’s self and social identities are constantly at interplay, where the notion of one’s self is negotiating with our social selves. In other words, we are constantly adjusting our identities to suit the circumstance, environment and people around us (Brown, AD 2001;
Whetten & Mackey 2002). That constant adjustment of identities leads me to the exploration of the extant literature called identity work. Empirical evidence and research has continually emphasised how much people have to work to manage their identities in different social environments, especially in organizations (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton 2000b; Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas 2008; Haslam & Ellemers 2005; Watson 2008).

Research on identity work within organizations spans across organizational research where in most cases, the outcome of these researches seem to outline several pressing issues such as the degree of identification individuals formulate their organizational identities with (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton 2000a), identifying an optimal balance between self-identity and social identity (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep 2006), the negotiation of tension between conflicting identities (Watson 2008) as well as identity struggle (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003). However, no research has been done in regards to how people construct their identities within a coworking space. Therefore, my research seeks to use the literature gathered from identity work to see how coworkers interact and form their identities from the coworking space’s perceived organizational identity and the social groups that surround them within that space.

**1.2 Brief Introduction of the Coworking Space**

This research is conducted within a coworking space in Melbourne. However, out of respect for the coworking space’s privacy, a pseudonym will be used to protect the identity of the coworking space as well as its members. For this research, the coworking space will be renamed as *The Hive*.

The Hive is a coworking space that was first introduced into Melbourne in March 2011. The Hive is a coworking professional space specially catered to individuals from various business sectors, focusing on budding entrepreneurs as well as start-ups. There is currently an approximate of 320 Hive members in Melbourne.
They emphasize on the very aspect of being part of a community and promote the collaborative and supportive structure that is deemed to be lacking in a conventional workspace. Their emphasis of ‘socialness’ and ‘interaction’ between its members have been portrayed through active weekly events such as Mixed Bag Lunches, Friday Wine-downs organized by Hive’s community catalysts. These catalysts act as facilitators that have a strong sense of community building who encourage Hive members to socially collaborate with each other as well as keeping the coworking spirit alive with social events organized within or outside the Hive.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

This dissertation has been developed to understand how coworkers construct their identity within the Hive. With literature supporting the notion of identity construction such as identity struggle, organizational identification, identification of optimal balances between self and professional identities within traditional bureaucratic organizations, the aim of this dissertation seeks to determine how identity work is being constructed within a coworking space in a single case study.

To achieve of this aim, the following research questions are developed in chapter 2.

**How do coworkers construct their identity within a coworking space?**

- What is the Hive’s organizational identity through its culture and image?
- How do the members of the Hive cowork?
- What are the different identities portrayed within Hive?

To answer the main research question, it is necessary to firstly determine the Hive’s perceived organizational identity through the projection of its culture (assumed values, cultural artefacts) and image (external marketing activities). Secondly, by looking into the
definition of a coworker allows me to gain deeper meaning as to what it means to participate as a coworker/member with and within the Hive. Finally, the exploration of the different identity portrayals/coworking archetypes within the Hive offers me insight as to whether it reflects and corresponds towards Hive’s perceived identity.

1.4 Methodological Overview

This research is an ethnographic study of the Hive over a period of three months. I was fully embedded within the coworking space as part of the community and actively participated in weekly social events and engaged in relationship building and discussions with my fellow coworkers. The primary ethnographic methods used in this research were participant observation and Netnography.

In this research, I look into how an individual socially constructs his/her identity/identities within the coworking space. As Dingwall (1997) suggests, there are three broad ways of studying social phenomenon such as identity work qualitatively. The three ways are: asking questions, hanging out and reading texts. Alvesson et al (2008) also state that the nature of identity is too complex and too processural of a character to be measured by quantitative methods. In their opinion, they mention that the methods most suited for the study of identity work would have to be interviews, participant observation and reading contextual cues and observation of behaviour.
1.5 Summary of this Dissertation

This dissertation has been divided into four key parts to enable a logical representation of the literature, the empirical research findings and their implications.

**Chapter 1** provides the context in which the dissertation has been undertaken, including the research problem, dissertation background and the research objectives. This is essentially the role of the chapter.

**Chapter 2** presents the conceptual foundations for the dissertation as found in current literature. This chapter will be sub categorized into four different parts:

*Part A – Coworking literature*

Part A examines the limited emerging coworking literature and how it differs from that of a traditional organization. This section describes what coworking is, who are the coworkers as well as the values and culture of a coworking space based on current literature. It also seeks to ‘set the scene’ by introducing coworking as a new way of work and point out the literature gaps.

*Part B – Organizational Culture, Identity and Image*

Part B explores organizational identity literature which led me to Hatch and Schultz’s (1997, 2002) Organizational Identity Dynamics Model. It demonstrates that organizational identity is similar to the concept built upon an individual’s notion of identity. An organization’s identity is constructed upon the notion that both culture and image are constantly at interplay with an organization’s identity. The adoption of this model provides me with a framework in regards to understanding The Hive’s organizational identity through their cultural artifacts and projected image surrounding the space.
Part C—The Constructs of an Individual’s Identity

Part C describes the theory of identity work of an individual as well as of a collective. It summarizes the reflexive notion of identity and how identity constantly evolves through time, space as well as situational cues. It is essential to understand the concept of identity construction within the individual as the organization in order to understand the identity constructs of the individual within the organization. In this study, the main theories that I follow are Mead’s (1934) notion of the Self and Generalized Other as well as Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) Theory of Social Construction.

This section also explores the literature in regards to identity theories found within a bureaucratic organization such as Organizational Regulation and Control as well as Conformity or Resistance. The exploration of these aspects of identity theories inform me of the possible identity constructs within The Hive and provide me with a background in regards to the types of identity portrayal within the Hive on an internal as well as external level.

Chapter 3 discusses in detail the research design adopted by the dissertation to make sense of the Hive’s organization identity and the identity construction of its members. This research is purely qualitative which focuses on ethnographic methods such as participant observation (for observation of physical space/identities) as well as the use of netnography (for observation of virtual space/identities). This chapter also discusses the dissertation’s data analysis process and presentation.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of empirical research undertaken as part of this dissertation. It is a collection of field notes and recorded conversations with Hive members over a span of three months. The data is reported in a predominantly narrative format, containing direct quotes from the respondents and experiences that I have observed during the data collection.
period. This chapter also presents and analyses the findings generated by the key identity constructs found during the research period.

**Chapter 5** discusses the implications of the dissertation’s findings in terms of the conceptual framework of the literature review and research objectives, its implications for the Hive and the coworkers as well as its contribution to literature. The discussion draws on the main points of the dissertation to a close and present recommendations and suggestions for future research.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical background by reviewing relevant literature on the key concepts of this study. This research provides a basis of understanding on the identity of a coworking space through its culture and image, and how coworkers construct their identities with the perceived identity of the space and those within it. This chapter will be sub categorized into three different parts: (i) Part A – Coworking Literature (ii) Part B – The Constructs of an Individual’s Identity (iii) Part C – Organizational Culture, Identity and Image.

Part A – Coworking literature

Part A examines the limited emerging coworking literature and how it differs from that of a traditional organization. This section describes what coworking is, who are the coworkers as well as the values and culture of a coworking space based on current literature. It also seeks to ‘set the scene’ by introducing coworking as a new way of work and point out the literature gaps.

Part B – Organizational Culture, Identity and Image

Part B explores organizational identity literature which led me to Hatch and Schultz’s (1997, 2002) Organizational Identity Dynamics Model. It demonstrates that organizational identity is similar to the concept built upon an individual’s notion of identity. An organization’s identity is constructed upon the notion that both culture and image are constantly at interplay with an organization’s identity. The adoption of this model provides me with a framework in regards to understanding The Hive’s organizational identity through their cultural artifacts and projected image surrounding the space.
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PART A- Coworking Literature

2.2 Introduction to Coworking

Seeing that the introduction of coworking is relatively new and there is a significant lack of scholarly articles on coworking, this section would lean towards a more descriptive nature, in which it describes and summarizes what the literature (both scholarly and non-scholarly articles) says about coworking. Most of the scholarly literature read in coworking is seen to be cohesive and concise, in terms where they promote the notion of a collaborative community and innovative culture (e.g. Spinuzzi 2012, Stumpf 2013, Tadashi 2013 Kwiatkowski & Buczynski 2011a, 2011b).

The strong rejection of traditional organizational culture is evident in the available research conducted on coworking, where they readily promote the notion of being ‘who you are’ and reject the notion of being confined within a regulatory structure. This rejection of traditional organizational culture and values is what I am intrigued about in this research in terms of how the individuals within this unique space interact and form their identities in accordance to the culture and values put forward by the people who discover coworking. The question I ask is whether there is a significant difference in the way people act just because there is a change in culture. Therefore, in this section I seek to introduce how coworking came about, what it is, who coworks, why they cowork as well as the values and culture a coworking space exudes in order to provide a comprehensive background of coworking as I can.
The Rise in Coworking

As times change and technology advances, the concept of working is no longer confined to the restrictions of a cubicle, a desktop within an organization. The rise in technology has been a major catalyst that results in the shift in how and where people work for reasons such as the rapid dissemination of information, increased communication, and the allowance of independence and freedom to work in as well as outside of the office (Green 2014b). A prediction Toffler made in 1980 (pg. 26) started the revolutionary shift in the dynamic of working culture where he states that personal computing would lead to the “electronic cottage” in which individuals could work from home instead of a designated work area.

This concept brought about new literature in regards to how the advancement of technology promoted mobility and flexibility for an individual to work away from the constraints of organizational walls (Geisler 2001; Kjaerulff 2010; Spinuzzi 2012; Stumpf 2013). Digitization has brought about the ‘digital nomad’ (Kleinrock 1996), a single individual that brings about the concept of working ‘here, there and everywhere’ (e.g. home, cafes, libraries, buses, trains, etc.) (Kleinrock 1996; Liegl 2014). The introduction of the digital nomad may seem possible seeing that the rise of technology has brought about the freedom of work mobility, where the physical presence of the individual is no longer needed in a specific space. However, it may seem that working from home or away from the office (e.g. cafes, libraries, etc.) are lacking in certain (e.g. social, physical) aspects of what an individual craves, mainly the lack of communicative networking, limited access to infrastructure and a need for firm Barriers between their social and professional lives. Research by Kjaerulff (2010) explored how teleworkers struggled in the separation of the social and professional lives and tried to rectify their social dilemma with the constant socialization of other teleworkers during weekly lunches. In conjunction to the previous research, Clark (2000)
found that rural teleworkers found it a challenge to ‘professional isolation’ and constantly sought out social and emotional attachments through the network of other freelancers.

The concept of work has shifted accordingly to the confines of a selected space (e.g. an organization, a building, a cubicle). Instead, professionals now have the freedom to work away from the office, given the advancement of technology; work can now be done through technological tools such as the laptop or mobile device. However, it may seem that the element of ‘socialness’ and interactionism between likeminded individuals are void when professionals choose to work in isolation. According to Spinuzzi 2012, the introduction of coworking spaces aid in ‘providing a space for likeminded individuals to cowork together’ (pg. 25). The idea behind coworking is to help promote innovative collaboration and community life for those ‘likeminded individuals’ within a space ‘in which they can foster and build social relationships as well as grow their’ (Kwiatkowski & Buczynski 2011a, 2011b; Tadashi 2013). Seeing that coworking is still considered relatively new in the organizational world, in the next section, I seek to provide a comprehensive view of the what, who, how and why of coworking through existing literature.
The idea of “commercial desk sharing” or serviced offices has always been highly sought after by entrepreneurs and freelancers where they offer physical elements of a workplace such as internet connectivity, work desk and an office pantry. The introduction of coworking incorporates the lost element of ‘social cohesiveness and interaction’, ‘cohesive collaboration’ and ‘knowledge creation’ through creative exploration (Hurry 2012; Spinuzzi 2012). The two main differences between a coworking space and a traditional office space is:

(i) the attributes of individuals are not restricted to a specific job, occupation and organization
(ii) the workplace is physically shared by them (Tadashi 2013). Even though the concept of coworking is relatively new and there is a limited amount of literature, the table below summarizes the definition of coworking, based on scholarly articles and academic research:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A coworking space is a hosting, working and meeting place for entrepreneurs who are carriers of projects and ideas and wish to share them with others; this place is powered by a specific animation intended to create links inside and outside of the community of coworkers. The room and equipment layout, as well as the specific animation model installed are studied in order to encourage meeting, collaborating, discussing and working (…) Through coworking, collaboration between actors is encouraged in this way an innovating ecosystem is generated on the local level.</td>
<td>Moriset (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworking means a way of working in which working individuals gather in a place to create value while sharing information and wisdom by means of communication and cooperating under conditions of their choices (…) First is the attributes of individuals</td>
<td>Tadashi (2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
are not restricted to a specific job, occupation and organization. Second is the workplace is physically shared by them.

A superclass that encompasses the good neighbours and good partners configurations as well as other possible configurations that similarly attempt to networking activities within a given space.

Shared work facilities where people can get together in an office like environment while telecommuting or starting up new businesses. … (they are) community centers for people with ideas and entrepreneurial inclinations… coworking spaces provide a physical proximity that allows people to develop natural networks and exchange ideas on projects. … (as a result coworkers) are happier and more productive together than alone.

**Table 2.1: Definition of Coworking**

As shown in the table of definitions above, the recurring terms that appear in those definitions are “collaboration”, “independent professionals” (e.g. freelancers, entrepreneurs, start ups), “community” and “networking”. These terms celebrate the elements of coworking from the space itself, to its values and finally to the people within the space. In my eyes, coworking is seen as “a group of likeminded individuals (coworkers) with differing attributes/occupations/interests working together in the same physical space (coworking space)”.

Research by Spinuzzi (2012) explores what coworking is, who co-works and why they co-work. Using fourth generational activity theory (4GAT) as a theoretical backdrop, he describes coworking as an ‘interorganizational, collaborative object’ in which ‘new types of agency that are collaborations and engagements with a shared object and for relationships between multiple activity systems (pg. 404)’. From his findings, he pointed out that even
though certain coworking spaces adopt similar attributes (e.g. collaboration, community, social interaction, communication); the definition of coworking was based on the coworkers interpretation of their own coworking space. Based on his research findings, Spinuzzi came up with three different types of coworking spaces:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coworking Spaces</th>
<th>Workspace Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Workspace</td>
<td>• Serves local communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community workspaces tend to define themselves in terms of serving local communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working alongside but not with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The objective was to work alongside, but not with others (sans collaborative projects).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emphasis on a quiet policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enforced ‘quiet’ hours to provide coworkers a conducive environment to work in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unoffice</td>
<td>• Encourages discussions and feedback (with coworkers and private clients)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interactions between coworkers were an essential feature in this coworking space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Declared that if a coworking space had a ‘no talking’ policy, it wouldn’t be a coworking space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Federated Workspace</td>
<td>• Promotes fostering of business relationships to personal ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The objective was to facilitate collaboration with others in a formal and informal relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A network of potential contractors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Saw the federated workspace as a workplace that provides benefits of interaction compared to the Unoffice.

Table 2.2: Different types of Coworking Spaces

From Spinuzzi’s research, we can acknowledge that even though certain attributes of coworking spaces remain similar, the strength of each attribute is determined and emphasised differently in the different types of coworking spaces. This serves to be an important aspect in this research as it serves to be a guideline in determining what type of coworking space The Hive is. It provides us with an overview of the space before allowing us to zoom in into the culture, identity and image of The Hive.

2.2.2 The Values of the Culture of Coworking

“The idea is simple: that independent professional and those with workplace flexibility work better together than they do alone… Coworking spaces are built around the idea of community-building and sustainability. Coworking spaces agree to uphold the values set forth by those who developed the concept in the first place: Collaboration, community, sustainability, openness and accessibility.”

- Coworking Wiki (Wiki, 2013)

According to Deskmag’s Global Coworking Survey in 2012, they found that 94% of their respondents seek to be part of a community where they can freely interact with others, have flexible work styles and serendipitous encounters, discoveries and opportunities. Like every organization, there is a need for a set of identifiable attributes for organizational members to abide by (e.g. a common culture) (Hatch and Schultz 1997, 2002).
From the definition above, it clearly states that coworking spaces agree to uphold the values ‘collaboration’, ‘community’, ‘sustainability’, ‘openness’ and ‘accessibility’. As there is limited academic literature in regards to coworking, it would be hard to pin-point the values of a coworking space without solid literature backing. So far, the only scholarly reading that focuses on the culture as well as the values of coworking spaces belongs to Kwiatkowski and Buczynski in their book, *Coworking: How Freelancers Escape the Coffee Shop and Tales of Community from Independents around the World*. While there are other sources such as Deskmag (an online coworking magazine), Cowiki (Wikipedia for Coworking) do provide similar interpretations of what the values of coworking are, it will not be included in this study as the evidence is seen as unsupported. Therefore, the use of Kwiatkoski & Buczynski’s values will be used in this research as there is supported and constructive evidence conducted on the values and culture of coworking.

In their book, Kwiatkowski & Buczynski (2011a, 2011b) lists the values and attributes based on the research done in regards to coworking spaces:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coworking Values</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>In a space filled with freelancers and entrepreneurs, collaboration is much emphasised within a coworking space. The core value here is the individual’s willingness to work with other members. According to Kwaitkowsky 2011b, collaboration includes sharing the sense of collaborative consumption and the spreading belief that access is more important than ownership (pg. 33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>The most important aspect of a coworking space is belonging to a community. Relationship building between coworkers is often fostered by community catalysts/community managers of a coworking space.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In community building, formal and informal interactions are often transpired between coworkers (e.g. lunches, social gatherings, going to coffee, etc.) However, it is important that the individual has to be willing to build and develop relationships with his/her surroundings.

| Sustainability | Coworkers are encouraged to be sustainable in the sense of sharing resources (shared office space). Also, sustainability can be seen as the community being able to sustain itself by finding new members, take part in managing the space, actively propose and help implement improvements. |
| Openness | Openness is in reference to the coworker’s willingness to take in new ideas and difference in opinions. According to Kwiatkowski (2011a), the perquisite for openness is trust. Without trust and openness, the benefits of coworking, like quality feedback, cannot be realized (Kwiatkowski & Buczynski 2011a). |
| Accessibility | Most coworking spaces open their doors to different groups of people and often use the term ‘diversity’. One of the unique elements of coworking is that anybody who can work from anywhere can do it. Kwiatkowski (2011b) also mentions that accessibility can be seen from a financial point as well, meaning that the price for membership should be reasonable and affordable (Kwiatkowski & Buczynski 2011b). |
| Creativity | The alluring attribute of coworking spaces is the lack of a routined workspace. In other words, there is a ‘freedom to express’ their creativity seeing that majority of coworkers come from creative Backgrounds. Expression and sharing of ideas are often encouraged in order to allow creative juices to flow (Kwiatkowski & Buczynski 2011b). |
The willingness to communicate and share knowledge is essential in a coworking space. It is only through communication that promotes the generation of ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>The willingness to communicate and share knowledge is essential in a coworking space. It is only through communication that promotes the generation of ideas.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 2.3: Values of a Coworking Space

From the literature, it may seem that the key emphasis of coworking is the community aspect of the space as well as its collaborative and communicative advantages (Foertsch & Cagno 2013; Hurry 2012; Tadashi 2013). However, participatory ethnography by Butcher (2013) has recently determined that even though the emphasis does lie within the walls of being a collaborative workspace, or ‘community’ through their structural environment and culture (e.g. casual dressing, communal dining area etc.), the social interaction among its members makes it questionable. Conformity issues and organizational behaviour have established the similarities between the coworking space and that of a traditional workspace. It may seem that its members are unknowingly put into an environment in which they are oblivious to the reality that they are somehow still part of a conventional organizational space (Butcher 2013). This finding makes us question whether the notion of community life is really evident within the walls of a coworking space or whether it is just the rhetoric of the organisers that engenders social interactions that construct the symbolism of community.

2.2.3 Why people cowork?

According to Spinuzzi (2012), he found that the reasons as to why coworkers cowork. He found that people coworked due to the (i) Space, Design and Professionalism (ii) Flexible working hours (iii) Location and (iv) Benefits from other coworkers (e.g. Interaction, Feedback, Trust, Learning and Partnerships. These factors serve as a basis as to why coworkers co-work. However, Spinuzzi found contradictions as to the way people co-worked, being such that some of them wanting to work in parallel and those who wanted to work
cooperatively. Spinuzzi was able to develop two different models from his findings, namely the good neighbours (where people work in parallel; emphasis lies on maintaining neighbourly relationships within coworking space) and the good partners model (inward looking process, which allows freelance specialists to network within the coworking space to tackle shared work problems). Although the differences of these models contain contradictions between user and expectation, both models coexist as a ‘superclass’ in each coworking space to differing degrees.

Deskmag, an online magazine catered specifically to coworking, tabulated results from their Global Coworking Survey in 2012 (Deskmag 2012). The results showed that the core values of community, collaboration and productivity remained strong among the users of coworking spaces. According to the survey, 71% of respondents said their creativity had increased since joining, and 62% said their standard of work had improved. Countering the common claim that coworking spaces can be distracting, 68% said they were able to focus better, as compared to 12% who said the opposite. 64% said they could better complete tasks on time. Some of the benefits were highlighted by the respondents who mentioned the reasons as to why they co-work. The benefits mentioned were: fun, friendly, creative, inspiring, productive, flexible, social and collaborative.

According to a qualitative study on coworking by Hurry (2012), his summary on the themes were determined by non-academic sources (e.g. blogs, online magazines/articles, newspaper articles) due to the lack of academic literature on coworking. He has determined that there are twenty-two themes that are consistently associated to why people co-work. The themes are: (1) Lower Cost (2) Coworking (3) Isolation (4) Security (5) Businesses to Network (6) Start-up (7) Social Network (8) Mobile Technology (9) Corporation (10) Telecommuting (11) Flexibility (12) Collaboration (13) Competition (14) Homogenous (15) Heterogeneous (16) Work/Home Separation (17) Had worked from home (18) Home distractions (19) Coffee
shop distractions (20) Noise issues (21) Other space (22) Age. While these themes provide an insight as to why people co-work, it lacks credibility seeing that the author relied on ‘physical wording’, ‘implication of the meaning of’ each theme. It is not sufficient as to why people co-work as people tend to look at coworking with rose-coloured glasses. However, it is a good summary as to why people co-work, from a single’s perspective (pg.35).

2.2.4 Who are coworkers?

Who are the coworkers? According to Deskmag’s Global Coworking Survey in 2012, 53% are freelancers, while the remainder are entrepreneurs, small company employees, big company employees, and 8% who describe themselves as none of the above (the proportion of "other" respondents has increased from 5% two years ago to 8%, while entrepreneurs has fallen from 18% to 14%). Similarly, Spinuzzi’s (2012) found that those who co-worked were small business owners, consultants, contractors, interns and business employees in which two-thirds of which had an information technology competent to their work.

The statistics above have found that majority of the coworkers are either freelancers or small scale entrepreneurs which allows us to determine that coworking spaces caters to a specific target audience. According to Tadashi (2013), he mentions that in present time, most coworkers comprise of freelancers or small scale entrepreneurs who work in the creative or IT fields. He defines freelancers or small scale entrepreneurs as individuals, who set up their practices independently, can acquire greater work autonomy than people in organization as they work either from home or a rented space; they have less physical contact and communication with others in workplace. In the case of small scale entrepreneurs, the only contacts they encounter are with the members of their group.
He then states that coworkers are ‘encouraged to form communicative and relational ties with other coworkers and even though they have different occupational interest, the level of diversity or difference in attributes with other people they come into contact with is, Basically, higher than among members who work in the same organization or small scale entrepreneurs (pg. 5).’ In other words, Tadashi (2013) is trying to emphasize that even though coworkers may make up of freelancers and small-scale entrepreneurs, a coworker is someone who embraces the aspects of coworking through social interaction, collaboration, communication with other coworkers. Without those aspects, the term ‘coworker’ would be seen as nothing more than a group of freelancers and small-scale entrepreneurs working in a common space.

2.2.5 Conclusion

From the literature, I have determined that coworking is conceptualised as a creative space that specifically caters to likeminded individuals such as entrepreneurs and freelancers where the freedom to express themselves is very much evident. What makes a coworking space unique are the very elements it holds such as the emphasis on community life, facilitated collaboration, effective communication as well as the emerging relationships within the space.

So far, existing literature has provided a reasonable amount of positive connotations celebrating this new found working phenomenon. While it may seem that the repetition of these positive attributes such as ‘collaboration’, ‘community’, ‘innovation’ are part of coworking literature, no research has gone beyond the surface of the space and looking deeper into the way these individuals interact from within. By looking into organizational theories such as organizational identity of the space through its culture and image, as well as identity work of the individuals within the space, I hope to be able to gather a deeper
understanding of how coworkers construct their identities with the space as well as the people within.
PART B - Organizational Culture, Identity & Image

2.3 Introduction

“What we care about and do defines us to ourselves and thereby forges our identity in the image of our culture.”

- Hatch and Schultz (1997, pg. 360)

Every organization has its own unique identity. Whetten and Mackey (2002) states that the very basis of organizational identity is similar to that of individual identity in which organizations are seen as ‘social aggregates’. Just like individuals, organizations are identified as ‘collective entities’ whose identities are constructed through social relationships with external variables (e.g. clients, collaborative partners). In other words the organization’s identity is formulated through the relationships within and outside the organization (Scott 2003; Whetten & Mackey 2002).

By drawing on the social constructionist paradigm, this research seeks to explore how coworkers construct their identities within a coworking space, namely The Hive. Before we proceed into exploring how coworkers construct their identities within the space they’re in, we must first determine the identity of The Hive. As there is a significant lack of literature in regards to identity construction in coworking spaces, the theoretical exploration of a coworking space’s identity will be analyzed through the use of Hatch and Schultz’s Organizational Identity Dynamic Model. The key emphasis of the model describes that organizational identity can only be determined through its ongoing interplay with its culture and image (Hatch & Schultz 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002). It is essential to explore the boundaries of organizational culture, identity and image as it establishes how individuals behave in different spaces and environments (e.g. traditional workspace and a coworking space).
2.3.1 Hatch and Schultz’s Organizational Identity Dynamics Model

Why Hatch and Schultz’s Organizational Identity Dynamics Model?

There have been various perspectives that determine the linkage between culture, identity and image. As this study focuses on the identity work of the coworkers within The Hive, the Hatch and Schultz model provides me with a framework as to how to determine the identity of the space. It is essential seeing that while people are what make the space, the space, in some ways, molds an individual’s behavior within the space (Alvesson 2011). Therefore, in order to determine the identity or what the space stands for, it is essential to explore its cultural artifacts as well as its projected marketing image (Hatch and Schultz 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002). In light of this study, what Hatch and Schultz show us is that the notion of identity is the reflection of its culture as well as image. Without each entity, it will cease to reflect what the organization represents and stands for from both end of the spectrum, internally and externally. In other words, none of the entities are seen to be mutually exclusive. Some researchers may argue that culture and identity is seen to be a limiting factor to the expression of organizational culture where culture lone is enough to identify what the space represents but fail to realize that by exploring one end of the spectrum would lead to failure of looking at ‘the bigger picture’ (Hatch and Schultz 2011). Research by Cornelissen, Haslam and Balmer (2007) has determined that the collective identity of an organization is the combination of three organizational theories: Social, Organizational, and Corporate Identity. They have established that the similarity of the theories can be seen collectively as the identity of an organization. At the extreme end of the scale, the social aspect is referred to the individuals within the firm who are set on the organization’s values and beliefs (e.g. culture). On the other end, the corporate identity focuses on the external aspect of the firm (e.g. clients, external shareholders) where symbolic manifestation (e.g. logos, artifacts, behavior, etc.) is used to identify the organization (Cornelissen, Haslam & Balmer 2007).
While the terminologies of organizational theories vary, the theoretical concept still remains the same. For example, their definition of social identity is referred to the perceived value system of an organization by the individuals. It corresponds with organizational culture, where the focus is primarily on an individual’s perception of the firm’s values and beliefs.

In comparison to the theory developed by Cornelissen, Haslam and Balmer (2007), where they theorized on how three theoretical concepts (social identity, organizational identity and corporate identity) are seen as single collective identities, Hatch and Schultz’s (1997, 2001, 2002) Organizational Identity Dynamics Model says otherwise. They state that the relationship between culture, identity and image forms “circular processes involving mutual interdependence” (pg. 361). The model provides a substantive representation of constant interplay between organizational culture, identity and image. They emphasize that even though the three variables (culture, identity and image) are seen as individual entities; the dynamic of an organization’s identity is represented through the constant interplay between all three variables rather than seen as an individual entity.

As discussed in the above section, we have established that an individual’s identity consists of both their self and an array of social identities, where they are constantly negotiating with, which ultimately leads us to the concept of identity work. Similarly, Hatch and Schultz’s model portrays similar attributes when it comes to an organization’s identity where the emphases that the organization’s identity is only seen as a whole as long as there is a constant interplay between its culture and image. In other words, the mutual interdependence between these three variables is essential in identifying an organization’s identity as a whole, rather than seeing each entity as an individual. Therefore, the use of Hatch and Schultz’s model is seen to be most suitable to be used in this research as it sees identity through a social constructivist lens and also that the formation of identity is fluid in accordance to factors such as social, environmental, situational that surround both the individual and the organization.
Using Mead’s ‘me’ and ‘I’ theory (1934) as a basis of their model, Hatch and Schultz’s (1997, 2001, 2002) Organizational Identity Dynamic Model focuses on identity’s relationship between culture (outline) and image (expression) of an organization’s identity. The four processes that link the three variables are: i) Mirroring, ii) Reflecting, iii) Expressing, and iv) Impressing.

Firstly, the mirroring and impressing process focuses on the relationship between identity and image. While mirroring focuses on the representation of organization’s image through the eyes of its stakeholders and inwardly affects change in identity, impressing focuses on the projection of an organization’s image through its identity (e.g. fashion, facilities, behaviour) to its external audience (e.g. members of the press, business analysts). Secondly, the reflecting and expressing processes focuses on the relationship between culture and identity. A reinforcement or change in identity (e.g. through the alteration in image) could bring about a change in culture. Seeing that culture is the summation of values and beliefs of members within the organization, the change in identity could be embedded deep into an organization’s identity.
cultural values and assumptions. On the other hand, the expression process allows members to connect deeper to the patterns of organizational culture and is expressed through artifacts (e.g. corporate advertising, dress, rituals) which become symbols by virtue of the meanings given to them.

The establishment of the Organizational Identity Dynamics Model has suggested an analytical framework that focuses on bridging the internal and external symbol context of an organization. It may seem that the theoretical concepts of organizational culture, identity and image derive from various disciplines. However, Hatch and Schultz have determined that their interdependence on each variable enables the formation of an organization’s identity as a whole. Seeing that this research focuses on the description of The Hive and ‘setting its scene’, I will be concentrating on both Organizational Culture and Image in order to determine the identity of The Hive. Elements of the coworking identity are still dependent on aspects of organizational culture, which are predominantly the surrounding artifacts of the space, the values it incorporates as well as the assumed values that the coworkers take on (Schein 2010). On the other hand, the reflection of the image (e.g. marketing activities such as brochures, online advertising), projects the image and values that the Hive stands for, especially to those who are within the Hive internally (Hatch & Schultz 2001).
2.3.2 Organizational Culture

“Culture can be perceived as a form of manipulation, it’s about power and control; about managing identities, and the hearts, minds, bodies and souls of people by controlling their thoughts, desires and experiences.”

– Cunliffe (2009, pg. 79)

According to Schein (2010), organizational culture is defined as ‘… a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to these values (pg. 54)’. Organizational culture encompasses three elements: (i) Tangible, observable artifacts (e.g. dress, slogans, mission, statements, office design, etc.), (ii) shared value system that members are aware of (e.g. customer service, product quality, etc.), (iii) a system of assumptions (e.g. nonnegotiable values that members are unconsciously aware but act upon) (Luhman & Cunliffe 2013; Schein 2004, 2010). Culture is formed through the emphasis of values and beliefs that are passed down from a dominant individual (e.g. top management) to the rest of its members. As these values and beliefs get embedded into the subconscious minds of members, they become ingrained as part of the organization’s identity. Both the visible and hidden aspects of organizational culture guides its members through the set of behavior and actions deemed appropriate for the organization, which ultimately promotes group cohesiveness and provides them with a sense of identity (Alvesson 2013; Ravasi & Schultz 2006).

Social constructivists (Alvesson 2013; Fiol, Hatch & Golden-Biddle 1998; Hatch & Schultz 1997, 2001, 2002) state that culture is not only captured through tangible artifacts but through the interpretative meanings individuals gather from their organizational experiences.
In other words, culture is interpreted through its organizational members by the material aspects of the organization (e.g. name, products, dress code, logos, etc.). Unlike organizational image, where the representation of material aspects displays the key idea of the organization to external constituencies, culture addresses how they are realized and interpreted by its organizational members. Since identity reflects how a social entity makes sense of itself, it brings together observable cultural artifacts and its deeper meanings. In other words, the identity construct is essential in the construct of perceivable organizational culture (Fiol, Hatch & Golden-Biddle 1998; Hatch & Schultz 1997, 2001, 2002). As quoted by Hatch and Schultz (1997), “What we care about and do defines us to ourselves and thereby forges our identity in the image of our culture (pg. 360)”.

As Hatch (1993) explains, artifacts become symbols by virtue of the meanings that are given to them. The adoption of symbolic objects allows organizational members to identify the meaning behind their cultural environment through their surrounding artifacts. Hatch and Schultz (2002) emphasize,

“…organizational cultures have expressive powers by virtue of the grounding of the meaning of their artifacts in the symbols, values and assumptions that cultural members hold and to some extent, share.” (pg. 1002)

The emotional attachment organizational members have towards these symbolic artifacts help create awareness towards the understanding of an organization’s culture. Therefore, organizational identity is not only the collective’s expression of organization culture; it is formulated through the surrounding symbolic objects that help provide awareness and understanding of the meaning behind the culture (Ravasi & Schultz 2006; Schein 2004; Scholl 2003).
In this research, the understanding of a coworking space’s culture will be determined through the meanings associated with the artifacts within the space as well as the values management passes down towards the coworkers. Through the observation of how the coworkers interact with the cultural artifacts and the management of the space allows me to explore how do coworkers ‘do’ coworking and that would provide me with a better understanding of what a coworking space really is.

2.3.3 Conclusion

In this research, the use of Hatch and Schultz’s Organizational Identity Dynamics Model is adopted as a framework to understand the perceived identity of The Hive. The key concept of the model demonstrates that the culture, identity and image are at constant interplay with each other, which corresponds with the theory behind the construction of an individual’s identity.

In other words, the internal reflection of the organization’s culture, consisting of the values, symbols and meanings that are passed down from management to the employees, and its external image, where it is often represented through external marketing activities (e.g. slogans, brochures, advertising), can help us understand what the identity of the coworking space is. By forming an understanding of the identity of the coworking space allows me to then understand how coworkers interact within The Hive.
PART C - The Constructs of an Individual’s Identity

2.4 Introduction

An organization’s identity is no different from an individual’s identity (Albert & Whetten 1985; Whetten & Godfrey 1998). Both entities question the very basis of their existence, formulated with the question: “Who am I?” or “Who are we?” In fact, the creation of organization’s identity is based on the combination of unique, fragmented individualistic members from within the organization, who seek to collectively define themselves with characteristics that are “central, distinctive and enduring” (Albert & Whetten 1985; Gioia, DA, Schultz & Corley 2000; Hatch & Schultz 2002; Luhman & Cunliffe 2013).

In this section, I seek to explore the representation of two entities: 1) Individual, 2) Organization. An individual’s identity compromises of their private internal identity and their public social identity. The term “self-identity” has been represented in different terminologies through various literatures and are often used interchangeably (E.g. Internal identity, individual identity, core identity, personal identity) (Alvesson 2013; Beech 2011; boyd 2001, 2006; Hatch & Schultz 2001, 2002; He & Brown 2013; Watson 2008). In this research, the term “self-identity” will be used to describe an individual’s identity that is formed through his/her experience of society and his/her perception of the world (Berger & Luckmann 1966; boyd 2001; Jenkins 1996; Mead 1934). On the other hand, “social identity” or “socio-identity” (Watson 2008) is commonly referred to an individual’s knowledge that he/she is a part of a social category/group where the want to belong is portrayed through an individual’s actions and behavior (Ashforth & Mael 1989).

An individual’s self and social identities are constantly at interplay, where the notion of one’s self is always succumbing to the pre-existing societal norms and groups. In other words, we are constantly adjusting our behaviour and mannerisms to suit the circumstance,
environment and people around us (Brown, AD 2001; Whetten & Mackey 2002). That constant adjustment of identities leads us to the exploration of a growing body of literature called *identity work*. A growing amount of empirical evidence and research has continually emphasised on how much people have to work to manage their identities in different social environments especially in organizations (Hatch & Schultz 2001; Watson 2008; Wieland 2010).

The main issue that follows an individual’s identity in an organizational context is that we may conceal our identity by wearing a mask of “professionalism” and unknowingly conform towards an organization’s culture, identity and image in order to “fit in” (Brown, AD 2001; Collinson 2003). However, no research has been done in regards to how people construct their identities within the spaces of a coworking space. Therefore, my research seeks to use the literature gathered from identity work to see how coworkers interact and form their identities from The Hive’s organizational identity and the social groups that surround them within that space.

### 2.4.1 An Individual’s Identity

It has been established that the study of an individual’s identity is unique and complicated. Employees, like you and I, enact identities that are fluid and constantly fluctuating between the desire to be unique and exclusive, and the want to be included and to belong (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep 2006). The ‘belongingness’ is what steers us to relate and identify to other collective identities that generally come in the form of social groups (Brown, AD 2001; Watson 2008).

Through the years, there have been various theoretical approaches to identity (Smith 1976, Mead 1934, Freud 1974). For example, post-structuralist researchers suggest that competing discourses contribute to the formulation of one's identity (Collinson 1992 and 2003, Nights
and VurduBakis 1994). Their assumption that each individual has an unchanging “sovereign” or “essential” self restricts the notion that identity is capable of the separation of the self and other (Mead 1934). One such perspective is by Giddens (1979) who claims that since people are embedded in social relations from birth and throughout their lives, ‘society’ and ‘individual’ cannot be separated. In contrast to that statement, Jenkins (1996) adds on by commenting “Individual identity –embodied in selfhood-is not meaningful in isolation from the social world of other people. Individuals are unique and variable but selfhood is thoroughly socially constructed: in the process of primary and subsequent socialisation and in the ongoing processes of social interaction within which individuals define and redefine themselves and others throughout their lives (pg.).” In conjunction to the statement above, this research leans towards the notion that the human being’s construction of self, of who they are and what they are, is shaped by discourse and social interactions that outwardly supports the fluidity and readjustment of an individual’s identity.

Having established that this research is supportive of the notion of individuals are constantly manoeuvring their identities through social interactionism and discourse, this part of the dissertation seeks to explore the notion of self (Mead 1934) and the how the self is managed (by the individual) through social interaction with other social identities (Berger and Luckmann 1966). The identification of the notion of self through Mead’s theory of self and other assists us to look back and to explore how social interactions (Berger and Luckmann 1966, Hatch and Schultz 1997, 2001, 2002, boyd 2001, 2006, Brown 2001) help shape an individual’s identity. While reflexive self-identity is not a modern phenomenon, the core argument of this section is that individual and collective identity can both be understood using the same model, as ‘internal’ and ‘external’ processes (Jenkins 1996). I seek to explore the constant adjustment and negotiation of the individual’s self-identity and social identity by
going back to the theories conceptualized by Mead (1934) and Berger and Luckmann (1966) which eventually led to the concept we define as *identity work*.

## 2.4.2 The Self and Generalized Other

"We are one thing to one man and another thing to another."

- Mead (1934), pg. 74

The role of personal agency and individualization in identity formation is the key to understanding the construction of social relationships. The foundation of Mead’s (1934) ‘me’ and ‘I’ theory provided future researchers a basic theoretical framework that led to the establishment of present day *identity work theory*. Mead’s theory of the ‘self’ and ‘generalized other’ represents the very basis of the relationship between the self and society. He suggests that most of a person’s ‘self’ is portrayed through social interactions with others through symbolic communication, and what determines the amount of ‘communicated self’ is through social experience (Mead 1934). Mead also established the differentiation between the ‘I’ and ‘me’ in his theory of ‘self’. The ‘I’ represents the instinctive and creative aspect of a person, which is unpredictable and volatile as it is dependent on the individual’s meaning of the world through personal life experiences. On the other hand, the ‘me’ is the representation of an individual’s external self-influenced by others in the social world; it is now society that dominates the individual and is a source of social control. In other words, individuals seek to form the structure of their relationships through the process of social interaction.

The representation of Mead’s theory of self and other is clearly mapped out in today’s theory of identity work where the identification of internal and social identity can be mapped through Mead’s theory of self and other. While the ‘self’ represents our self-perception of the world, our ‘generalized other’ seeks to perform and externalize the characteristics adopted through group membership and societal norms. According to Mead (1934), “both aspects of
the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ are essential to the self in its full expression (pg. 199).” In other words, both the community and our individual autonomy are deemed necessary towards the formation of one’s identity as a whole.

**The Social Construction of Individuals within an Organization**

An individual adopts multiple identities in different social environments. It is the ‘generalized other’ that allows individuals to adapt to social norms, rules and regulations which indefinitely alter the way we act in different social events (Mead 1934). Social constructionist theory has taken Mead’s ideas further to suggest how the supposed objective facts about social selves are socially constructed in terms of our embedded social relations (e.g. Berger and Luckmann 1966, Hatch 1997, 2002, Cunliffe 2008, Alvesson 2013). The formation of individual identities is based on the capitalization of social interactions and human relationships (Berger & Luckmann 1966; Cunliffe, Ann L. 2008; Hatch & Schultz 2002). Through a social constructionist lens, the world is contextual and dependent on the ways humans construct the meaning behind action. The key to the construction of meaning are through the power of symbols and language. Social theorists have determined that language and symbols are key determinants to the construction of knowledge and social behaviour, where individuals can gather symbolic meanings through the use words and actions in social contexts. Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) theory of externalization, objectivation and internalization best summarizes how the use of social interaction, language and symbolic meanings constitute the production of one’s identity.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) suggest that through externalization, objectivation and internalization, we are then only able to identify the identities of others and our own individual identity. Externalization, seen as the bigger picture, seeks to explore “the world as it already is” where the construction of behavior and characteristics has been formed by those
before us. We seek to identify more of our “self” through objectivation (where we head out to learn about previously formed actions and behaviors) and internalization (where the breakdown of past mannerism allows us to find personal meaning towards our inner selves). Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that only when we become conscious of our identity as a “generalized other”, that we become an “effective member of society and in subjective possession of a self and a world” (pg. 137). The world is only identified when we are able to interpret meanings of events and other subjectivities and in doing so we take on the world, the identity of others and therefore our own place and identity (Berger & Luckmann 1966; Cunliffe, Ann L. 2008).

Social constructivists seek to identify how knowledge and meanings are socially constructed. They have collectively agreed that the way people constantly readjust themselves is dependent on both the social setting and interactions. The key aspect of social construction is derived through the interaction between individuals (agencies), which allow us to self-construct the type of relationships we desire within an organizational setting. In other sense, the use of social constructivism provides a potential mechanism for us to self-create the type of organizational structure we want through social relationships. Research by Abaza and Fry (2007) has determined that when the identity constructed by members within an organization is more congruent to the identity constructed outside the organization, it is more likely that the institution will achieve its specific goals faster and more efficiently. However, in the world today, majority of the organizations impose their structure upon individuals, which ultimately suppresses our internal identities in an organizational environment (boyd 2001; Brown, AD 2001) which will be further discussed later in the chapter.
2.4.3 Othering

The want to belong socially is portrayed through our social relationships and group cohesion. This aspect of our social selves was crucially important in the early days of human civilisation and required strong demarcation between our allies and our enemies. In order to thrive, we needed to be part of a close-knit tribe who looked out for us, in exchange for knowing they’d help look out for them in return. This sense of community is what we humans crave in order to feel like we belong, a group in which we seek to identify with. However, in the world we live in today, we are constantly surrounded by the notion of ‘grouping’ where people are often stereotyped into different classes (e.g. race, religion, etc.) (H.Tajfel & J.Turner 1979). By doing so, we tend to treat them differently based on the classes we’ve sorted them into.

This action is none other than Othering. According to Weis (1995), Othering is a process which serves to mark and name those through to be different from oneself (pg. 18). In other words, Othering enables us to identify those who we think or assume are different from us or the mainstream and can reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and subordination. Researches by Hatoss (2012) and Elliot (2010) demonstrate the readiness of how we can be swept up by group identity, learning to only embrace those who we identify with and reject the ‘others’, even when the difference is completely petty and meaningless.

In the globalised world today, management and organizations have become increasingly culturally diverse (Mahadevan, Primecz & Romani 2014). The complexity of organizational diversity and related cultural dynamics often facilitates the Othering process. In a research conducted by Candales (2000) on the teaching practices of a Latina nursing faculty, she found that there were two different types of Othering categories – Exclusionary Othering and Inclusionary Othering. She made it known that even though these relationships were still
within the context of power and power relationships; that use of power was approached differently. On one hand, Exclusionary Othering often uses the power within relationships for domination and subordination, where stereotypes and the visibility of one’s Otherness (e.g. skin colour, accent, language, age, etc.) come into play. On the other hand, Inclusionary Othering is used as a process that attempts to utilize power within relationships for transformation and coalition building, where the sense of community, cohesion and inclusion is strongly emphasized (Canales 2000).

Exclusionary and Inclusionary Othering co-exist in the relations of the Self and Other (Canales 2000; Mead 1934). It is a matter of which process dominates and which succumbs to the pressures between interacting individuals. Canales (2000) states that neither one is mutually exclusive and both categories could be concurrently present within the same organization or institution. Literature has shown that diversity within organizations can be seen to be a ‘breeding ground’ for the facilitation of power struggle, group stereotypes and othering (Brewis 2005; Hatoss 2012; Riach 2007). In this research, I seek to understand if those identity aspects can be found within the coworking environment.

2.4.4 Identity Work in Organizations

The above theories (both Mead 1934 and Berger and Luckmann 1966) serve as a foundation of identity theory, and particular interest here: identity work. From the literature above, we could say that concept of internalization and externalization of identity is a two-step process which we as individuals manoeuvre reflexively; this is the ‘doing of’ identity.

Identity work is often represented in many forms throughout identity and organizational literature such as Identity Construction (DeRue & Ashford 2010; Dutton, Roberts & Bednar 2010), Identity Management (Riel & Balmer 1997) and Identity Project (Meyer 2006) as a way of dealing with ‘agency’ aspects of identity shaping. In this case, identity work leans
towards the notion of interplay between both the self and the social identities of the individual. In organizational literature, identity work theory can be seen as “unattributed” and “without formal definition” (e.g. Pullen 2005, Storey et al 2005) (Watson 2008). One significant case is by Storey et al (2005) who clearly state that there is “little empirical analysis of this process (identity work) in action”. In contradiction to the statement above, Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) rebutted it with their own definition of identity work where they mention that it’s the work that people undertake in ‘forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness (pg. 1165)”.

In conjunction to identity work, Alvesson at al (2007) states that (a) personal identities are negotiated - created, threatened, bolstered, reproduced and over hauled – through ongoing, embodied interaction.; and (b) for both form and substance, personal identities necessarily draw on available social discourses or narratives about who one can be and how one should act, some of which may enjoys stronger institutional and material support than others (pg. 11) (Ashcraft and Mumby 2004, Thomas and Davies 2005) The internalization aspect of the individual represents the person’s self-identity as we described previously as his/her experience of society and his/her perception of the world (Berger & Luckmann 1966; boyd 2001; Jenkins 1996; Mead 1934), whereas the ‘generalized other’ (Mead 1934) or the socio-identity (Watson 2008) is represented through the externalization of the self through membership and social interaction with a collective group (Ashforth & Mael 1989; Jenkins 1996; Watson 2008).

This self-externalization, or rather, the Other we see is often described through social identities that we manage whilst in different social situations/groups. The most commonly used theory describing this social phenomenon is the social identity theory. It is most appropriately defined as “the ways in which individuals can be seen as part of a collective
entity in the mind of themselves and others by analysing process of self-categorization and psychological commitment” (pg. 359)” (Haslam, Postmes & Ellemers 2003) (also see Cornelissen, Haslam and Balmer (2007); (Ellemers, de Gilder & A. 2004); H.Tajfel and J.Turner (1979); Tajfel (1982). The importance of understanding social identity, which is also represented as a collective identity, is due to the fact that it plays a crucial part in this research seeing that the organizational identity (which will be later discussed) is seen as a collective and not a personal one (Ellemers, de Gilder & A. 2004; Gioia, AD, Schultz & Corley 2000a; Haslam, Postmes & Ellemers 2003).

According to research conducted by Watson (2008), he distinguished five types of social identities within the organization such as (i) social-category (e.g. class, gender, nationality, ethnicity) (ii) Formal-role (e.g. occupation, rank, citizenship) (iii) Local-organizational (e.g. a IBM operations manager, a Deloitte sales accountant) (iv) Local-personal (characterizations which various others make of an individual, in the context of specific situations or events) (v) Cultural-stereotype (e.g. a boring account, a devoted mother, etc.). His research lets us explore the fluidity and flexibility of one’s identity inside and outside the organization, which brings us back to the concept of identity work. It also gives us insight into the fact that these social identities are not seen as separate from one’s self-identity but rather, how these social identities help frame the individual’s self-identity within the walls of the organization.

Another common theory coinciding with social identity theory is through Goffman (1959) theory of performativity where he describes how the self is shaped by the dramatic interactions between social actors and their audiences. He mentions that all social interactions can be seen as a series of interactive performances where the actors are constantly altering their presentation based on their assumptions about what is acceptable in situations and the reactions they receive from others. The key focus of his theory was based on “impression management”, where individuals seek to create good impressions socially. It is the desire to
create a good impression that leads to the creation of social conformity where the internal need to belong creates a mechanism for society to be regulated by these social norms.

Overall, the research on identity construction within organizations is an active and promising area of inquiry. The focus on how individuals develop sustained answers to questions ‘Who am I?’ provides an understanding of how identity work occurs as well as the role of the organizations in this process (Wieland 2010). For example, while Alvessson et al. (2008) defines identity not only “Who am I?” but also” How should I act?” the determination of an individual’s identity is not only recognised in the saying but also the doing (Wieland 2010).

In this study, the reflexivity of the Self (personal identity) and Other (social identity) (Mead 1934) is an essential framework as it provides me with a basic understanding of how individuals construct their identities within organizations. Given that the context of study is on a coworking space, where its unique culture differs from a traditional culture, it is interesting to understand and explore how coworkers construct their identities through symbolic interactionism with the space but also with the people within.

2.4.5 Identity Regulation and Control

In most of the scholarly articles, research on identity constructs is seen to focus on traditional organizations and not coworking ones. The literature on traditional organizations offers a variation of identity constructs. In this study, the term ‘traditional bureaucratic organizations’ is defined as an organization that focuses on strict regulatory culture, where professional organizational behaviour such as dress code, structural organizational values come into play.

While in identity studies, Tracy and Trethewey (2005) suggests that the separation of identity and image is the real self and impressions are somehow less genuine, fake selves. It may seem that this is even more evident especially in traditional bureaucratic organizations where emphasis on identity regulation (Wieland 2010).
In traditional organizations, the assumption of the term “identity regulation” is achieved through organizational control where the emphasis on corporate rules and regulatory conformance is acquired through structural formulation, procedures and measures and targets of the organization (Barley & Kunda 1992; Casey 1995, 1996, 1999; Deetz 1992; Kunda 1992; Ray 1986). Barnard (1968) states that the key defining element of any organization was the necessity of individuals to subordinate, to an extent, their own desires to the collective will of the organization. In other words, in order for an individual to be successful in the workplace, it is essential for them to surrender a part of themselves to the organization (Chester 1969). It is because of the statement above, regulation and control has always been a debate in organizational literature. Coworking literature has always rejected the notion of traditional regulatory structure that is found within traditional organizations. In contrast with a traditional organization, they strongly encourage on the freedom of expression in terms of being ‘who you are’ as well as being part of the community. This makes me question whether ‘being who you are’ may conflict with the identity portrayed within the community. What happens if your identity doesn’t match up to the community’s?

In his book, Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a high tech organization, Kunda’s (1992) ethnographic journey through a high tech organization brought about discovery of how cultural artifacts are used explicitly in an effort to control employee behaviours and compel their commitment to the organization’s goals. Kunda finds that the employees resist these efforts in multiple ways where it leads to individual struggle between the distinction of their self-identity and corporate identity. He later found that it came to a point where they start fighting against their self-identity and start to create the ‘appropriate organizational self’, which led to employees becoming cynical and alienated. He mentions that, “under normative control, it is the employees’ self – that ineffable source of subjective experience- that is claimed in the name of corporate interest (pg. 11).”
In addition, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) mention that regulation and control are not necessarily negative connotations as to what people generally assume and that it does not work outside nor pull away from the individual’s quest for self-definition within the organization. They argue that “identity regulation is a significant, neglected and increasingly important modality of organizational control, especially perhaps in larger corporations and those that are more readily located in the New E-conomy in addition to the longer established province of the professional service sector (pg. 621).” They also mention that the use of “organizational control is fused/interacted with the individual’s self, indicating that ‘the self-identity, as a repertoire of structured narrations, is sustained through identity work in which regulation is accomplished by selectively, but not necessarily reflectively adopting practices and discourses that are more or less intentionally target at the insides of employees including managers (pg. 627).” In other words, identity control can be understood as a critical element of the employment relationship through the processes of induction, training and corporate education (e.g. in-house magazines, posters, etc.)

In another study by Brown and Lewis (2011), where they analysed routine practices within a law firm, mention that through the use of routines, the lawyers were able to fashion their selves into autonomous professionals. They were able to take the ‘mundane, every day, repeated patterns of lawyer activity’ and incorporate it into their sense of self. (Brown, AD & Lewis 2011). To a certain extent, the need for organizational regulation and control is essential in managing and maintaining structure in an organization. However, an over excess of control may lead to managers seducing their subordinates into calibrating their sense of self with a restricted catalogue of corporate-approved identities bearing strong imprints of managerial power. This corporate regulation of self may also be constituted as a kind of ‘invisible, identity cage’ (Collinson 2003), which ultimately leads to the need for either conformity or resistance by the individual.
2.4.6 Conformity and Resistance

The result of conformity and resistance normally tends to occur when identification to an organization is low and when there is a high level of regulation and control. It appears that in cases where employees do not identify with the values and culture of the organization, a regime of ideology still seems to be at work (Barker 1993; Fleming & Spicer 2003). These instances normally occur in surveillance-based organizations (Collinson 2003) (also called capitalist organizations (Fleming & Sewell 2002), bureaucratic organizations (Barker 1993)). The term ‘surveillance-based’ describes organizations that follow a stringent set of regulatory structure and induces a high-level of control that shapes the employees attitudes, emotions, sexualities, values, thoughts, bodies, appearance, demeanour, gestures, and even humour and laughter (Burrell 1992; Collinson 1999, 2003; Fleming 2002; Foucault 1977).

According to Collinson’s (1999, 2003) research, he states that “surveillance systems render individuals ‘calculable’ and even ‘confessional’ selves who collude in their own subordination (pg. 535).” His research looks into the several ‘survival strategies’ that employees undertake to reconstruct themselves when there is a discrepancy between their self and the organization, namely the conformist, dramaturgical and resistant selves. Majority of the studies lean towards the notion that the use of power and discipline (high regulation and control) actively constructs the conformist self within an individual. Deetz (1992) argues that new management control systems that target the very selves of workers attempt and often succeed, in persuading workers to ‘want on his or her own what the corporation wants (pg. 42)’.

Similarly, Barley and Kunda (1992) also make the point that under the control of corporate culture, employees ‘make no distinction between their own welfare and the welfare of the firm (pg. 382)’. Even in the case where they dis-identify with the organization, he/she acts
like they believe in the incorporated values of the firm, it is at this level that we can determine that the level of conformity is at its highest and cultural power is at its most potent form. The outcomes generated from the conformist self is when they seek to ‘distance’ themselves from the organization and escape into a private world outside work which might ultimately lead to outcomes such as absenteeism, resignation or even psychologically ‘splitting themselves’ (Collinson 1999, 2003; Kunda 1992).

Employee resistance naturally happens when organizational members start to ‘react’ towards the dis-identification they have towards corporate culture and values. Edwards et al (1995) states that resistance consists of two distinct functions: (i) it allows employees to voice dissatisfaction and, (ii) it enables them to create the ‘space’ to exercise autonomy – no matter how limited – thereby increasing their ability to accommodate and survive regimes of control (Edwards, P, Collinson & Rocca 1995; Fleming & Sewell 2002). The outcome of resistance can come in a variety of forms such as sabotage, work-to-rule, and union orchestrated strikes. Regardless of whether we choose to conform or resist the identity of the organization, we tend to ‘subjectify’ ourselves in different social categories. In the next section, I seek to explore the literature on organizational archetypes and how these archetypes can serve as a basis to the construction of identity within a coworking space.

2.4.7 Organizational Archetypes

“Archetypes wake consciousness and engage deep feelings in the process of experiencing”

- Kostera (2008) pg. 29

According to Kostera (2008), myths and stories revolving around organizations and its actors have a strong symbolic impact on people’s imagination and organizational culture as they touch base with deep rooted collective processes such as the individuals’ personal experiences as well as their interpretation of reality (Kostera & Obloj 2010). This is due to
their being replete with archetypes. As defined by Jung (1968), archetypes are “constructs said to exist as common patterns containing hidden images of all human motivations and inspirations. They are concealed in the collective unconscious domain of reality and are shared by all humans. They are the substance that myths and symbols are constructed of and because of their universality they have the capacity of turning individuals into a group and can be seen as the underpinning of culture and society (pg.67).” In summary, archetypes are ‘human constructs’ that are subject to conventions, in that they are ‘product of cultures’ and ‘learned associations’ (Chesebro et al. 1990, pg. 261).

According to Gill (2013), archetypes represent idealistic images of who we should or should not be and archetypal organizational figures represent the ideal relationship to work and an economic system as it evolves over time (pg. 334). In her paper, she mentions that the introduction of entrepreneurship has led to the examination of organizational archetypes, namely the Entrepreneurial man, the Self-made man and the Organization man. While the Organization man is often characterized by careerism and company loyalty, they are often bounded by restrictive professional organizational norms such as routine work tasks and definite working hours. In exchange for their loyalty and ‘obedience’, they are often rewarded with benefits such as bankable promotions, raises, retirement pensions as well as job security (Fraser 2002). On the other hand, the Self-made man is a long standing organizational archetype that focuses on the expansion of emerging industries and new possibilities. These people seek to venture the possibilities of starting a new empire and are always looking to ‘make something’ of oneself in an ever growing, connected society compromising of the ideology of the ‘American dream’ (Gill 2013 pg. 337).

The rise of entrepreneurship in recent years brought about the introduction of the Entrepreneur man. As the world begin to process in terms of new technology and globalization, the promise of stable work is no longer an expectation and careers are now
understood as ‘boundaryless’ (Roper et al. 2010, Gill 2013). In other words, these entrepreneurs and budding start-ups are no longer bounded by the assumed restrictive culture behind organizational walls. They have the freedom to work when they want, where they want and how they want (Ainsworth & Hardy 2008; Holmer Nadesan & Trethewey 2000).

While Gill (2013) research has given us an insight in regards to organizational archetypes in light of the recent entrepreneurial studies, she focuses on seeing entrepreneurs as single entities rather than a collective group. The introduction of coworking spaces has allowed entrepreneurs and freelancers to collectively work together, which would bring about interesting outcomes in terms of entrepreneurial discourse and social interaction. Adoption of archetypal studies in this research allows me to understand the different characters involved within the culture of the coworking space.

In this research, the introduction of coworking spaces makes it an interesting context seeing that it is a new form of organizational space in which identity work is done, with the space as well as the people within, in order to embody innovative collaboration as well as community life. With no research conducted on identity construction within coworking spaces, the study of how these ‘coworking archetypes’ are formulated through identity construction is looking to contribute to coworking literature as well as identity theory.

This raises the following research questions:

**How do coworkers construct their identity within a coworking space?**

- What is the Hive’s organizational identity through its culture and image?
- How do the members of the Hive cowork?
- What are the different identities portrayed within Hive?
To answer the main research question, it is necessary to firstly determine the Hive’s perceived organizational identity through the projection of its culture (assumed values, cultural artefacts) and image (external marketing activities). Secondly, by looking into the definition of a coworker allows me to gain deeper meaning as to what it means to participate as a coworker/member with and within the Hive. Finally, the exploration of the different identity portrayals/coworking archetypes within the Hive offers me insight as to whether it reflects and corresponds towards Hive’s perceived identity.

2.3.8 Conclusion

From the literature, we can establish that identity work is a process whereby individuals constantly negotiate between their self and other. Additionally, we can determine that our individual identities consist of two aspects, our sense of self (self-identity) and social identities, where both are constantly at interplay with each other. In order to embrace one’s full identity, people must process a situation, read contextual cues, present their internal sense of self, adjust their presentation and constantly negotiate what is socially acceptable. This part of the literature is the first stage to the construction of the conceptual framework to this dissertation as it allows us to have a glimpse into how individuals socially construct their identities in different contexts, and in this case, a coworking space.

Research on identity work within organizations has spanned across organizational literature where in most cases, the outcome of these researches seem to outline several pressing issues such as the degree of identification individuals formulate their organizational identities with (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton 2000a), identifying an optimal balance between self-identity and social identity (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep 2006), the negotiation of tension between conflicting identities (Watson 2008) as well as identity struggle (Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003). The key determinant of the level of an individual’s identity within the organization
begins with the culture and image of the organization itself. In other words, the way the organization identifies itself (to its employees or the general audience) serves as the basis of employee identification, which could eventually lead to the outcomes as stated above.
Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview and rationale for the selection of the research design adopted by the thesis to evaluate the Hive’s organization identity and the identity construction of its members. This research is purely qualitative which focuses on ethnographic methods such as participant observation (for observation of physical space/identities) as well as the use of netnography (for observation of virtual space/identities).

3.2 Research Methods

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Methodology

It has been demonstrated that even though there have been substantial amount of studies conducted on identity work within organizations, there is a significant lack of research done towards identity work within coworking field. The literature has yet to reveal any theory in regards to this new phenomenon. Hence, this thesis is in a unique position where it has become an exploratory study where I attempt to gain an understanding of a new field of study where no literature exists with a view to developing theory rather than testing a pre-existing one.

The implementation of qualitative research methodology in this study has allowed me to explore the identity constructs within a coworking environment. Qualitative research is defined as a research “devoted to developing the understanding of human systems” in which the techniques and procedures used to furnish the means for bringing the researcher’s vision into reality (Creswell 2009; Savenye & Robinson 2001; Strauss & Corbin 1998).
3.2.2 Interpretivist Epistemology

Epistemology is defined as the study of knowledge and understanding, where a relationship is built between the researcher and reality. It seeks to question the way knowledge is produced and how it can be acquired, and the extent to which any given subject or entity can be known (Carson et al. 2001; Johnson & Duberley 2001). This qualitative study was carried out following an interpretivist epistemology approach, where I used ethnographic methods of observing coworkers from a selected coworking space. From an interpretivist outlook, research knowledge is determined through value-laden socially constructed interpretations between individuals. Its goal is to understand and interpret human behaviour rather than to generalize and predict its cause and effect (Hudson & Ozanne 1988). I seek to explore the comparison between an individual’s online and offline identity within an organizational context, where the use of participant observation technique in this research is deemed most suitable. In Table 3, I have summarized the roles of a researcher using Interpretivist Epistemology.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Interpreivist</th>
<th>Roles of the Researcher</th>
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<td></td>
<td>• Understood through ‘perceived’ knowledge</td>
<td>• Concentrates on understanding and interpretation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Research focused on the specific and concrete</td>
<td>• Researchers want to experience what they are studying</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Seeking to understand specific context</td>
<td>• Allowing feeling and reason to govern actions</td>
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<td>• Partially create what is studied, the meaning of phenomena</td>
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3.2.3 Why Ethnography?

“Fieldwork stories are not told, they are shared.”

- Butcher and Judd 2013 pg. 2

Ethnography is a form of qualitative research used to describe a society, group or culture. Due to its interpretivist nature, there has been an amount of backlash in regards to the use of ethnography in studies, with researchers proclaiming the lack of credibility, substantiveness and generalization in its findings (LeCompt & Goetz 1982). It can be represented through the use of traditional qualitative methods such as participant observation and in-depth interviewing. According to Watson (2012), the term “ethnography” is the "close involvement with people in a particular social setting and relates the words spoken and practices observed or experienced to the overall cultural framework within which they occurred” (Watson 2012). In other words, ethnography is a set of methods that involves the researcher to participate in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said and collecting available data that could throw light on the issues identified in the research (Pink 2001).
Being embedded into the lives of research participants is what makes ethnographic methods unique. It provided me with an opportunity to be ‘surprised’ with the new knowledge gathered through personal real-time experiences especially since we are currently living in a world bounded by our assumptive theories (Willis 2000). Ethnographic methods allow me to explore deeper through the different meanings of an individuals’ socially constructed lives where expression is not only through language but also by emotional encounters and real life experiences (Butcher 2013; Cunliffe, A & Coupland 2012; Cunliffe, A.L 2011).

Ethnography is a sensitive register of how experience and culture indicate social and structural change (Cunliffe, A.L 2011). There is always more in the field than can be explained by existing answers. The beauty of ethnography is that it allows us to look beyond the physical and allows us to gain deeper meaning of certain phenomenon, which allows me to share a ‘story’ rather than report cold hard facts (Butcher 2013). It is only when “the specific theories are yet to be developed, which makes it necessary to have the widest and loosest, ‘hunch driven’ definition of ‘relevance’ which can only be experienced and recorded only through a degree of sensuous immersion in the field. (Willis 2000 pg. 114) “

According to Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), the study of identity work in organizations involves a focused examination of specific processes and influences entailed in individual identity construction and in order to answer the question “Who am I?” or “Who are we?”, an individual crafts a self-narrative by drawing on cultural resources as well as memories and desires to reproduce or transform their sense of self (Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas 2008; Knights & Willmott 1989).

In this research, I look into how an individual socially constructs his/her identity/identities within the coworking space. As Dingwall (1997) suggests, there are three broad ways of studying social phenomenon such as identity work qualitatively. The three ways are: asking
questions, hanging out and reading texts. Additionally, Alvesson et al (2008) state that the nature of identity is too complex and too processural of a character to be measured by quantitative methods. In their opinion, they mention that the methods most suited for the study of identity work would have to be interviews, participant observation and reading contextual cues and observation of behaviour.

The use of interviews has often been critiqued as being too ‘biased’. Researchers argue that there is some doubt in the way people express themselves realistically especially knowing that they are being ‘judged’ by the interviewer. However, Alvesson et al (2008) point out that research interviews can be used as provoking identity construction by calling overt attention to ‘who one is’ in relation to ‘what one does’. Therefore, the use of interviews can be used as a basic level of identifying the relationship an individual has with their organizations. It provides us with basic knowledge as to what role and what does the individual do in the organization.

In the case of ‘hanging out’ or ‘reading texts’, researchers tend to define that as part of what they call participant observation. The difference between interviews and participant observation is that in observational methods, we tend to notice the smaller things rather than the bigger things. For example, not only do we focus on organizational talk-in-motion (such as meetings, practices, routines that are normally centered around organizational talk), focus on informal conversation or mundane behaviour (such as getting coffee from the pantry) between employees can be seen as how people apply knowledge or routinely produce something in everyday work.

According to Ashcraft and Mumby (2004), the way an organization presents itself through its culture and image produces and constructs an individuals working identity. They mention: “Representations of subjectivity at work exceed yet nonetheless influence organizations qua
workplace (or physical spaces where labour is accomplished) and can be found in such sites such popular culture, occupational associations, educational settings, industry or trade forums and other social locations wherein working identities become organized (pg. 462).”

Therefore, in this research, I seek to adopt observation techniques, which allows observe activity and interaction within the space, as well as conduct interviews in order to gather a deeper understanding of the identity construction of the members within the coworking space.

3.2.4 The Role of Ethnographers

The main ethnographic method used during data collection is the use of participatory and observational skills of a researcher within his/her selected fieldwork environment in order to study a phenomenon and deliver it in his/her own perspective and interpretation. (Cunliffe, Ann L. 2010; Neyland 2008; Pink 2001; Watson 2012; Ybema et al. 2009). The best representation of ethnographic work was determined by Atkinson and Hammersley (2007), authors of the book “Ethnography: Principles in Practice”, in which they mention that “ethnographic work normally consists of the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data that are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging enquiry.”

My role in this research is to immerse myself into the coworking space and become one of coworkers. By submerging myself into the field of coworking, it allowed me to constantly ‘hang out’ with the Hivers which enabled me to gather a better understanding of the identities that they construct within the space. On top of that, the adoption of informal and formal
interviews with the Hivers also allowed me to gather deeper meaning into their coworking lives.

Furthermore, Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) provided clear details of the data collection process during ethnographic study (pg.3), in which clearly articulates the role of an ethnographer:

1) People’s actions and accounts are studied in everyday contexts, rather than under conditions created by the researcher – such as in experimental setups or in highly structured interview situations, In other words, research takes place “in the field”.

2) Data are gathered from a range of sources, including documentary evidence of various kinds, but participant observation and or relatively information conversations are usually the main ones.

3) Data collection is, for the most part, relatively ‘unstructured’, in two senses. First, it does not involve following through a fixed and detailed research design specified at the start. Secondly, the categories that are used for interpreting what people say or do are not built into the data collections process through the use of observation schedules or questionnaires. Instead they are generated out of the process of data analysis.

4) The focus is usually on a few cases, generally fairly small-scale, perhaps a single setting or a group of people. This is to facilitate in-depth study.

5) The analysis of data involves interpretation of the meanings functions and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local and perhaps also wider, contexts. What are produced, for the most part, are verbal descriptions, explanations and theories; quantification and statistical analysis play a subordinate role at most.
3.2.5 Reflexivity and Subjectivity

“A reflexive approach recognizes the centrality of the subjectivity of the researcher to the production and representation of ethnographic knowledge. Reflexivity goes beyond the researcher’s concern with the questions of ‘bias’ or how ethnographers observe the ‘reality’ of a society they actually distort through their participation in it.”

- Pink (2001) Pg. 19

Reflexivity is entwined with the crisis of representation that questions our relationship with our social world and the ways in which we account for our experience. It is commonly referred to the capacity of an agent to recognize forces of socialization and alter their place in the social structure. For example, a low level of reflexivity can be seen when an individual is shaped largely by their own environment and a high level of reflexivity is determined when an individual shape their own norms, tastes, politics and etc. According to Cunliffe (2003), reflexive approaches constitute from the work of various influential fields, cultural anthropology, sociology, postmodernism and poststructuralism. She mentions that researchers in these two fields should not accept a fixed account of the truth as individual relationships and social interactions are not ‘pre-structured’ or ‘rule-driven’.

She further dissects the various types of reflexive approaches through metaphorical representations and approaches: Otherness (Deconstructionist approach) and Betweenness (Constructionist approach). The introduction of these two metaphors has different effects on organizational theory. Having drawn from the postmodern and poststructuralist paradigm, otherness adopts the deconstructionist/contradiction-centred approach where “language speaks through subjects to create a fictive, relative reality (pg. 986)”. In other words, meaning is created through a constant interplay of presence/absence and what is not said is as important as what is said because each supplements the other. This approach tends to thrive on the oppositional logic where meaning and relationship between the researcher, text,
subjects and reader are open to reflexive scrutiny. In organizational literature, this approach seeks to deconstruct organizational ideologies (e.g. power relations, management theory) by seeing them as entities separate from those who study or live them.

On the other hand, Betweeness is drawn from the disciplines of cultural anthropology, sociology and social constructionism. ‘Betweeness’ focuses on not only the language but through the social construction between individuals in our socially constructed lives by determining how we make sense of the world (e.g. emotional encounters, experiences, etc.). Both deconstructionist and constructionist perspectives provide us with a reflexive approach, but with a different focus. While deconstruction perspective focuses on the underlying concerns such as uncovering uncertainties, constructionist approaches focus on our being and how we make sense of the world through the social interactions and experiences encountered.

In this research, I lean towards the latter where I seek to embed myself within an environment and observe how individuals socially construct their identity through the different spaces of a coworking space.

The Researcher in the Field

Before immersing myself in the world of coworking, I was deemed as a ‘stranger’ to this unique culture by not only the coworkers around me but also towards the space itself. The only knowledge I have gotten is through literature (both scholarly and non-scholarly articles). My assumption of this positive outlook (Hurry 2012; Kwiatkowski & Buczynski 2011a, 2011b; Stumpf 2013; Tadashi 2013) of coworking made me excited to enter into a world where I expected to see vivid images of individuals huddled together from diverse backgrounds picking each other’s creative brains. I was excited to look into a world where I have only read about in articles, experiencing it was a totally different ballgame (Coffey 1999). In response to this cultural ‘strangeness’, Coffey (1999) states that ‘the ethnographer
cultivates strangeness and distance in order to gain insight and understanding of the cultural setting while experiencing personal growth, based upon a view of the self as a product of and subject to its own agency and will... the ethnographic self actually engages in complex and delicate processes of investigation, exploration and negotiation (pg. 22)

A key example given is shown by Kondo (1990), an American-Japanese, whose research focused on the Japanese culture. While her appearance came off as Japanese, she lacked cultural competencies of how to act and behave within the Japanese culture having grown up in the American one. While living with her Japanese host family, she was able to adjust the self and identities she has always known and externalized (Japanese-American, female, academic researcher, anthropologist) and add on new roles (honorary daughter, student, guest, prodigal Japanese) through experiences, interaction that she has obtained through her fieldwork. Kondo addresses this reflexivity as a two-way process, where her hosts assigned to her culturally meaningful roles in which she took in readily. In other words, Kondo’s recasting of herself was the response of her cultural strangeness. Similarly, other researchers (e.g. Butcher 2013, Cunliffe 2003, Clifford 2010) have mentioned that an ethnographic research do unavoidably constructs and reconstructs the researcher. Kondo’s example of the discovery of her ‘hidden Japanese identity’ has been brought to life through the want to belong (Butcher 2013) and active participation (Cunliffe 2003) with the culture itself (Kondo 1990).

My study on coworking spaces is relatively similar to Kondo’s experience in the Japanese culture seeing that I am a ‘stranger’ to the coworking world. This ‘cultural stangeness’ allowed me to come in the Hive with a clean slate, open to understanding the coworking culture through interaction and participation with its members (Cunliffe 2003) and the being part of the community (Butcher 2013). While I relate to Kondo’s ‘feelings of strangeness’ towards my journey in the Hive, her experience in the Japanese culture is more of a cultural
embebedness rather than mine which is a constant back and forth of the coworking culture. At the risk of simplifying it, there was no form of exit for her seeing that she was in a different country and culture whereas in my case, I was constantly moving back and forth from the coworking one.

The expectation of entering a coworking space gave me high hopes that perhaps the notion of working is changing. Having been personally worked in a traditional organizational setting before, I understood the feelings of identity suppression perfectly. My Hive beginning was pretty similar to most of its members. My membership came with a fixed desk area, full use of all of Hive’s physical amenities, a swipe key card as well as a full orientation of the space by John (Hive’s primary community catalyst). I was given free rein to choose between two permanent desk areas and I chose one that gave me a full overview of the space (in which I self-named the Throne because it overlooked the entire space). It was intriguing sitting at my newly appointed seat the first day in, observing noticeable details to the minute ones.

During my time at the Hive, I would spend at least 4 days a week (mostly weekdays), 8 hours a day attending every possible event (social events organized by the Hive such as Mixed Bag Lunches, Wine Down Fridays), making new friends and chatting with my next door neighbour, Sarah. Sarah is part of an organization that helped autistic kids through the use of music therapy. Seeing that my cousin is autistic, she and I bonded quickly and she was one of those who guided me through my journey at the Hive, having been there close to a year. I quickly expanded my ‘Hive network’ alongside with my consistent weekly attendance at social events, which I reckon was the best place to network if you are new. In three months, I could say I have had informal interviews with approximately 25 Hivers and observed their interaction with each other.
3.2.6 Why a Single Case Study?

As mentioned by Fidel (1984), the case study method is a specific field research method. Field studies are investigations of phenomenon as they occur without any significant intervention of the investigators, which is relevant to this ethnographic study. Becker (1970) confirms that notion by mentioning that the case study can refer to a detailed analysis of an individual case supposing that “one can properly acquire knowledge of the phenomenon from intensive exploration of a single case (pg.75)”.

Additionally, Vaara and Whittington (2012) states that it is a challenge for scholars to perform researches that focus on the individual (micro) as well as institutional level (macro) (Vaara & Whittington 2012). With the macro level having such a broad spectrum (e.g. the coworking industry), it is too demanding for this research considering the short time frame and lack of resources. On the other hand, the micro level allows me to focus on the coworking members’ identities on an intricate level, which allows me to gather deeper meaning and understanding of the identity portrayal within a coworking space.

![Figure 3.1: Single Case Study](image)

*Figure 3.1: Single Case Study*
3.3 Research Design

Most ethnographers tend to overlook the fact that organizations are part of a society in which they assume that each organization is unique (Neyland 2008; Ybema et al. 2009). The term “organization” is used in another way in the social sciences, as defined by Watson, is referred to the “society-level” and “increasingly cross-societal”, meaning that an organization is part of a society (Watson 2012).

Figure 3.2: Different forms of Ethnographic Methods

The ethnographical methods that I have chosen to adopt are: i) Participant Observation (observation of the physical space) ii) Netnography (observation of the virtual space) (Refer to Figure 3). In this research, I will be embedded into the Hive to understand and explore the variations of identity of individuals in the physical environment while comparing and observing their identity construction on the virtual platform through the use of the social networking platforms they use to communicate. Furthermore, being involved in the community, both offline and online, allows me to gain first-hand experience in regards to how individuals manage construct their identities within the Hive.

3.5 Research Outline

The initial contact with the Hive was made in July 2015 by my supervisor, Dr. Tim Butcher and myself. After negotiation with Hive’s management, we have come to an agreed payment
for a period of three months as the Inaugural Researcher in Residence for the Hive. This allows me to have free access with casual member privileges, freedom to interact with existing Hive members physically and virtually (through HALO and Yammer) as well as a fixed desk at the Hive.

Klein and Myers (1999) say that in interpretive field studies there is interplay between participants and researchers, and this is certainly the case in our study. In the three months at the Hive, I would often come in 3-5 times a week and constantly attended their weekly social events such as the Mixed Bag Lunches (Thursdays) as well as Friday Wine-downs (Fridays) in the hope of fully submerging myself within the coworking culture. As Hive frequently organized events for its members, I made sure I attended those events in the hope of understanding the meaning of community life and collaborative immersion.

The attendance of social events allowed me to often interact with my fellow coworkers and discuss their experiences, opinions and perspectives in regards to the Hive. That form of interaction exposed me to a lot of insight in regards to the culture of the Hive. Freedom to access to its online platform as well connected me to many other Hive members that I barely see physically and connected me to members from different parts of the Hive (E.g. I sat at the third level, however, Yammer allowed me to connect to people on the second level).

3.5.1 Participant Observation (Real-life Identities/Communities)

The use of participant observation has been substantially relied on under the use of ethnographic methods. Participant observation is defined as a process in which the presence of the observer in a social situation is maintained for the purpose of scientific investigation (Duff 2002). Unlike traditional methods where the researcher seeks to gather data from
participants on a one-off basis, it is essential that the ethnographer embed himself/herself into the cultural environment to gather a deeper and meaningful understanding of the researched phenomenon. Researchers have established their concern in regards to the validity and credibility of participant observation techniques (Schwartz & Schwartz 1955), stating that the use of ethnographic methods, primarily participant observation is biased and valueless (Becker 1958). However, the best rebuttal to the claim is by Atkinson and Hammersley (2007), they mention that:

“However ‘impersonal’ or formulaic the work of the natural scientist, it stands in no ‘natural’ relationship to the phenomena and events it describes. On the contrary, the textual products of natural sciences are highly conventional where their apparent guarantee of authenticity and credibility is depend on readers’ adopting shared strategies of reading and interpretation.” (pg. 254)

*The use of interviews in Participant Observation*

The use of interviews is essentially a “two way communication” which allowed interaction between the researcher and participant and enabled the interviewer to “hear the other’s voice” (Strauss & Corbin 1998). As stated by Patton (1990), the purpose of interviewing is to “allow us to enter into other person’s perspective” and qualitative interviewing begins with the “assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to make it explicit” (Patton 1990; Watts 2001).

Informal interviews were selected in this research to bring about a higher level of social interaction between the researcher and the informant to provide a greater insight into the “experiences and attitudes” of the interviewees with minimal control by the researcher. The use of unstructured interviews enabled the researcher to gain a broader view on identity
construction within the coworking space. In this study, there were 25 coworkers that were informally interviewed.

3.5.1.1 Data Collection (Participant Observation)

The intent of ethnographic methods are to provide a detailed, in-depth insight of everyday life and practices (Willis 2000). In this research, participant observation would deem to be most appropriate for us to fully immerse into the life of the coworkers and to determine the how the construct their identities within the Hive.

The data collected was in the form of my daily fieldnotes as well as recorded conversations that I have had with the members of the Hive. The field notes consisted of the behaviour, their language, their attire, significant experiences as well as the physical environment and ambience of the space on the day. Recorded conversations were transcribed later on to aid in the analysis process.

3.5.2 Netnography (Online Identities/Communities)

3.5.2.1 Ethnography on the Internet

Netnography was introduced as a methodology in the 1990s. The term "Netnography" can be sometimes be confused with the term "digital ethnography". Digital ethnography deals with the use of all kinds of new technologies (refer to next section: Use of Images, Technology in Ethnography), not necessarily the Internet (E.g. digital videos, images, etc.). On the other hand, netnography is a seen to be a multi-method approach but developed as a distinct method with specific steps and procedural guidelines specifically for the study of Internet communities (Kozinets 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010). Netnography is defined as “interpretive method devised specifically to investigate the consumer behaviour of cultures and communities present on the Internet” (Kozinets 1998) (pg.366).
Netnography is proven to be useful in three general types of studies: i) methodology to study cyber cultures and virtual communities ii) methodological tool to study derived cyber cultures and virtual communities and iii) as an exploratory tool to study general topics (Kozinets 1998). Netnographers are generally interested in the production of online communities and cultures, with the primary focus of how identities are created and expressed through social interaction and learning processes (Bardzell & Odom 2008; Campbell 2006; Correll 1995; Gatson & Zweerink 2004; Kozinets, Robert 2001; McLeod 2002; Nelson & Otnes 2005)

3.5.2.2 Private Social Networks - Yammer

The use of Netnography as a methodological method would serve to be appropriate for identity construction within the virtual space of the Hive. Research has shown that the use of social networking sites does play a huge part in nurturing organizational relationships (Anderson & Mohan 2011; Marwick 2005). There are companies who offer private social networks especially for organizational usage. These private social networks offer organizations the opportunity to adopt the basic structure of Facebook such as information sharing, interactive discussions, etc. without any form of distraction (e.g. online games provided by Facebook).

Yammer (http://www.yammer.com), a company that was founded in 2008, offers private social network services within an organization. Built from Facebook’s DNA, Yammer allows organizations to personally customize the type of network landscape catered specially for their organization using the basic structure adopted by Facebook. It allows the organization to: enhance conversations and discussions held by employees, facilitate content collaboration, connect and collaborate with external partners and clients all with a single platform. By doing so, it enables privacy within the organization.
3.5.2.3 Use of Images, Technology in Ethnography

The use of photography and videography in ethnographic research has been long debated on whether it is ethnographic by nature. According to Pink (2001), she claims that the ‘ethnographicness’ of photography is determined by discourse and content of the image taken. She mentions that any photograph may have ethnographic interest, significance or meanings at a particular time or for a specific reason (Pink 2001). In addition, research by Edwards (1992) has stated that the use of anthropological images is subjective towards an anthropologist viewpoint where he/she is able to gather ‘useful and meaningful visual information’ (Edwards, E 1992). He mentions that, “the defining essence of an anthropological photograph is not the subject-matter as such, but the consumers’ classification of that knowledge or reality, which the photograph appears to convey (pg. 13).”

In Pink’s (2001) book, Visual Ethnography, she employed the use of photography when researching Spanish bull fighting. The photographs narrate the process in which a female bullfighter has to undertake during a bullfight. They demonstrate the different scenarios in which the bullfighter has to perform during the entire show segment (e.g. the toss of her hat over her head to signify she was dedicating her bull to the audience, the wave of her red muleta, catching the bull horns with her bare hands, killing the bull, etc.) She mentions that during interviews, bull fighting supporters (aficionados) see the process as a performance where the slaying of the bull would determine the performance skills and achievements of the bullfighter. On the other hand, a couple of viewers in the UK expressed a different meaning from the images, citing them as a narrative towards animal rights and cruelty. The above example seeks to determine the subjective nature of the photographs based on the viewer’s own cultural and experienced-based knowing and moral values that give meaning to the images.
In summary, the use of pictures and technology during an ethnographic study enables the researcher to further explore the boundaries of the “meaning of” (e.g. environment, symbolic objects, conversation, interaction, etc.). Pink’s experiences in the bullfighting arena opened the use of photography and technology as a subjective one which can be employed during the use of ethnographic study such as the use of images during conversation with participants.

In this research, there is a mixture of illustrations taken from the Hive’s website as well as photographs that I have taken with my smartphone while at the Hive to give readers a peek into the coworking world. As Pink (2001) mentions, we understand the meaning behind these scenarios that have happened before, through evoking emotions and thoughts through these images. The reason for these photos is to give a visual understanding of what it is like to be a coworker within the Hive.

3.5.2.4 Data Collection

Residing within the guidelines and techniques of traditional ethnography, the data collected from Netnographic research would be mainly textual consisting of downloaded files of postings, transcripts of conversations via Yammer and picture files/digital media (Beckmann 2005; Kozinets 1998; Kozinets, Rovert 2002). It will thus be part of the observational process, whilst following the selected participant online.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Introduction

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory is a qualitative research tool that enables the researcher to seek out and conceptualise “social patterns and structures of an individual’s area of interest through the process of constant comparison (pg.24).” (Glaser & Strauss 1967). This strategy involves taking a single piece of data (e.g. one theme,
phenomenon) and comparing it with the collected data in order to develop notions of the possible similarities and differences between various pieces of the data (Strauss & Corbin 1997).

3.6.2 Why use Grounded Theory?

**Figure 3.3: Data Analysis Process**

*Source adapted from: Glaser and Strauss (1967)*
The grounded theory methodology would fit well into my research as the theory is specifically used to study human phenomenon in which the researcher is embedded within fundamental human process (e.g. Interaction in the candidate’s daily lives) in order to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour or experience (Denzin & Lincoln 2003).

In grounded analysis, the study’s emphases develop from the data rather than from research questions or existing literature (Tracy 2012). Research normally tends to begin with the raising of generative questions which help guide the research but are not intended to be either static or confining. As the researcher begins to collect data, one theoretical concept(s) are identified and tentative linkages are developed between the theoretical core concept and the data (Glaser & Strauss 1967). The adoption of theories such as Identity Work and Organizational Identity theory are both areas that have been well explored in Organizational Studies, which would serve as a strong theoretical concept to identity construction within organizations. However, with most of the literature being focused on a single scene (mainly traditional bureaucratic organizations), the outcome of these studies may or may not reflect what is found of that in a coworking space.

According to coworking literature, the introduction of coworking spaces promotes cultures that strongly differ to those in a traditional organization (Spinuzzi 2012; Stumpf 2013; Tadashi 2013). The introduction of coworking archetypes through identity construction within the coworking space can be seen to be a contribution in coworking literature. This is a new area of research and so, a Grounded Theory approach is most appropriate because with coworking is a new phenomenon in the organizational world, the outcome of this study would serve as a contribution to both coworking and identity theory, which in turn, would be valuable to organizational literature.
According to Creswell (2009), the process of data analysis involves “the preparation of data for analysis, conducting various types of analyses, moving deeper into the understanding of the data, representing the data and making an interpretation of the data’s larger meaning (pg. 183).” As shown in Figure 6, the researcher has adopted the data analysis process (Glaser & Strauss 1967) as a basic framework for analysis.

1) Data Collected

Data will be collected through ethnographical methods (Participant Observation) and field notes will be constantly jolted down while the researcher is on the field.

2) Open Code Analysis

Categorizing the Data Creswell (2009) states that data analysis always begins with a coding process, which demonstrates the organizing of data collected into different segments before bringing meaning to information. Open coding is conducted all through the data collection period where the researcher literally codes everything with for everything (Corbin & Strauss 2008). This process would eventuate into the identification of the research’s core category and provides the researcher a valid understanding of the behavioural patterns in the substantive area.

The codes were derived from the data collected from the researcher’s field notes, informal and formal interviews and daily Yammer activities projected by the coworkers. The collected data will be read through repeatedly and the researcher will be using colour highlighters to differentiate the various themes extracted from the data. While coding the data, the researcher added brief verbal descriptions to small chunks of data to help her identify the similar coding patterns and also to determine emerging themes from the data collected.
3) Comparison Study $\rightarrow$ Axial Coding

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), comparison study is described in these stages (pg.105 – 115):

(i) **Comparing incidents applicable to each category**

The defining rule for the constant comparative method is: *While coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded within the same category* (pg. 107). In my research, I intend to constantly compare the differences between both online and offline identities within an organizational framework in order to determine the similarities and differences in the same identified category.

(ii) **Integrating categories and their properties**

Joint data collection and analysis enables the researcher to determine the full picture of the research. Thus, combining both the data collected from online and offline identity would allow me to understand the different nuances of identity within different spectrums.

(iii) **Delimiting and writing the theory**

Being able to comprehend and select the necessary themes required for the formulation of a new theory is necessary at the end of the analysis stage.

4) Combine the theory and literature in order to add on/propose a theory

5) Review and Evaluate
In this research, the use of theoretical literature during the data analysis process brings about the use of thematic analysis. As described by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is referred to as “qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes data set in detail interpreting various aspects of the research topic” (pg. 79). The use of thematic analysis in this research would assist me in identifying common themes but will also hopefully bring about the discovery of new themes that would serve as a contribution to this research.

3.7 Researcher’s Role

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is known to be interpretive research where the researcher’s “values, biasness, personal background (e.g. gender, culture, and socioeconomic status)” plays a significant role in shaping the interpretation of data collected. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest that by providing an outline of the researcher’s background, it would allow the readers to briefly understand of the researcher’s interpretive mindset.

Researcher’s Background

I was raised in Singapore but am currently studying a Masters by Research degree in the School of Management, RMIT University (Australia) as an international student. I recently graduated with a Bachelor of Business (Honours) in 2011 and has presented my research at the Australasian Conference of Undergraduate Research in 2012 held in Sydney.

Technological changes, such as social networking, has always been my key interest especially in business organizations where the use of social networking is deemed to be revolutionary and changes all aspects of marketing. However, many studies and research have demonstrated the positivity of social networking sites in business organizations and
lacked the need for further research. My Honours research focused on the adoption of social networking sites as a marketing tool during the Singapore General Elections in 2011. The results showed that the freedom to disseminate information quicker allows Singaporeans to receive a flow of transparent information, creating the well-informed citizen, which in turn relinquishes them from the reigns of media control. In turn, the lack of media control inspires the connotation of “freedom of speech” which encourages political parties to perform a two-way participation in order to bring their message across.

Researcher within the Coworking Space

As this research is subjective to my interpretation, it is essential that the readers see me as a player in the field and understands the research as always filtered through me. It is important to paint a picture, in terms of what it was like to be there, when or where I felt comfortable, how the site itself shaped the project as the research was conducted and my own preconceived and eventual assumptions of coworking.

Having explored the positivity of social networking sites in the political arena, I seek to further explore how the construction of identity in both the physical and virtual spaces of a coworking space. Sensing a lack in literature in regards to coworking spaces, I thought it would be interesting to explore an area which hasn’t been thoroughly looked into rather than a traditional organization (e.g. Deloitte, IBM). I thought that by looking into coworking spaces, I would be able to use the data collected to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between a traditional organization (based on literature) and coworking spaces (based on data collection). The adoption of ethnographic methods would allow me to have a deeper insight of the lives of an individual and enables me to add new knowledge to organizational, identity and coworking literature.
Before deciding on researching on coworking spaces, I knew I had wanted to concentrate on identity construction within traditional organizations. However, my supervisor, Dr. Tim Butcher introduced me to the aspect of coworking when we decided on the research space that I had wanted to work in. This exposed me to the idea of identifying coworking archetypes within a coworking space as the proposition of researching a new way of working intrigued me.

During the span of my fieldwork over the next three months, I found that even though the artefacts around the Hive does promote and support the notion of coworking, there were deeper issues in terms of the assumed values the coworkers have of the coworking space. The superficiality of the promotion of coworking values were skimmed through during the start but deeper understanding of coworking is only brought out through its members. Having established close knit relationships with the community leads and a couple of Hivers allowed me to gather deeper insight in regards to the shift from coworking to traditional organizational culture. This finding allowed me to look further into the tension and reasons as to why this shift has occurred.

### 3.8 Ethical Issues

The research for this study was conducted at Level 1, category Low Risk in accordance with RMIT’s research approval document. In accordance to the ethical considerations the participants have:

- The right to withdraw from participation at any time.
- The right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that in so doing does not increase the risk for the participant.
• The right to have any questions answered at any time.

**Anonymity Issue**

Participants were given the choice on whether to allow their identity to be included in the thesis and any publications, as the researcher felt that it would increase the credibility of the research if their identity were made known. No risk would be inflicted on the participant if their identity were revealed. However, in the event that the participant did not wish for his/her identity to be made known, the researchers ensured that the information given was kept confidential and would only use pseudonyms. All of the participants were asked to remain anonymous in this research.

The researcher explained beforehand that the interview is voluntary and that the data will be kept in confidentiality before handing them a copy of the PLS. The potential candidate was given a consent form to read and sign before the interview commenced.
Chapter 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS & ANALYSIS
4.1 Introduction

In the first portion of the findings, I seek to give a detailed narrative of the ‘doing of coworking’ within the Hive, from my personal experiences as well as the experiences of the members of the Hive. I then ‘set the scene’ of the Hive by offering the readers a descriptive portion of what amenities and facilities are available for Hive members. Subsequently, I seek to understand the identity portrayed by the coworking space through its cultural artefacts and projected image. Finally, it narrows down into the exploration of the different types of coworkers’ identities within the space through the behavioural observation and interaction techniques that I adopted during the course of ethnographic study.

These ‘coworking archetypes’ were constructed based on the stories, the symbols, meanings, experiences and observed interaction of the coworkers on how they ‘do’ coworking. In order to make my findings more comprehensive, I have also incorporated the use of visual ethnographic aspects such as photography and 3D images (floor plans). The use of pictures and technology during an ethnographic study enables the researcher to further explore the boundaries of the “meaning of” (Pink 2001). Therefore, I seek to incorporate visual representations in this research to provide the reader a clearer image of what the Hive represents.
4.2 The Doing of Coworking

I start out this chapter introducing the Hive with a detailed narrative of how coworkers ‘do coworking’ within the space. This section is based on my personal experiences as a coworker whilst interacting with other coworkers within the Hive. “Welcome to the Hive family!” John exclaimed. John is one of the community catalysts at the Hive and was waiting at the entrance of the ballroom to welcome me in. The Hive is being managed by what they call Community Catalysts. As one of the community catalyst mentioned, “We are the life of the Hive!” the community catalysts play a vital role in trying to facilitate interaction and enforcing the coworking culture amongst the coworkers.

The promise of a family and a community life incorporated into a space gives individuals reason to hope for a workplace where, in the words of one of its members, ‘they can be themselves without all the unnecessary pretence’. And by that, they mean the ability to express themselves not only through their abilities and specialized skills but also through who they are as individuals (Haslam, Postmes & Ellemers 2003). As one of its members put it, “the moment I experienced life at Hive, I knew this was it… it is unlike any other organization I worked for.” This statement demonstrates that Hive, in some ways or another, provide these members with an alternative work life. This alternative, in other words, provides them a chance to ‘be who they are’ without the regulatory structures found within organizations (Brown, AD 2001).

Just like its slogan, ‘Driving Innovation through Collaboration’, Hive emphasizes on the very aspect of community life and facilitates innovation and creativity through collaborative tie-ups. The idea of a community is the lifeline of not just the Hive, but to all coworking spaces (Hurry 2012; Spinuzzi 2012; Stumpf 2013). According to Butcher (2013), what binds a community is through the shared understandings about what it is to belong together and these
come from a distinctiveness and sameness within (pg. 5). He also adds that community life is commonly conceptualized as *anti-establishment* and *anti-organization* (Bauman 2001; Calhoun 1983; Cohen 1985; Kanter 1972). This is interesting seeing that the meaning of a community is similarly linked to that of an organization’s identity (Albert & Whetten 1985). The only aspect differentiating the concept of community away from the reigns of a traditional organization is how community life is seen as ‘anti-establishment’ and ‘anti-organization’.

4.2.1 The Ballroom

I was nervous but giddy with excitement as I entered through the wooden doors into the Hive. Growing up, as well as working, in the Singaporean culture has given me an insight of how strictly monitored and stringent regulations are within our local organizational culture. From a young age, I have always been exposed to ‘asking for permission’, ‘abiding the perceived societal and organizational norms’, and ‘following the structure’. Many of which I have tried my hardest to break away from but to no avail. In my eyes, the concept of coworking was like a breath of fresh air. I had high expectations entering this space where I can finally feel like I can be part of a community and finally ‘be myself’.

I scanned around the room like a kid in a candy store. I absorbed everything, from the open space layout, to the dozens of MacBook computers on the desks, people speed-walking from one end to the other, and the hustle and bustle of human life. The floors were wooden so you could hear the sound of shoes hitting the floorboard. I could see distinct objects that celebrated the reasons as to being a Hiver, such as a sticker on a pot plant that said “*Hivers do epic shit*”, a sign on the door that says “*We are proud to acknowledge the Wurunjeri people as the traditional owners of the land*”, a huge TV facing me with the Hive’s online platform logo flashing in and out of the screen alongside with the number of signups Hive has
had over the past months. Everyone around me seemed to be buried in their work, with the sounds of typing keyboards, the pitter-patter of footsteps hurrying from one end to the other, distant murmuring and talking coming from different groups and laughter coming from one end of the room. The atmosphere was welcoming with sunshine warmly radiating from the glass windows, with jazz music playing in the background. Coworkers were either engaging in small talk or deep in discussion with their teams. It seems that majority of the people working here dress casual (e.g. jeans, polo tops, sweaters). John’s job as a community catalyst was to introduce and familiarise newly-joined Hivers to their surroundings. During the orientation tour, we made a right turn and came into what they call the ‘Green Room’. He explained that the Green Room was where teams with more than three people rent out private desks where they could head to everyday to work. Just like the Ballroom, the atmosphere in the Green Room was lively and vibrant; coworkers were walking in and out, deep in discussion with their fellow team members.

Figure 4.1: Level 3-The Ballroom
The Ballroom’s a vast, open space with dozens of table and office chairs scattered but at the same time, arranged neatly side by side. “The Ballroom allows Hivers to sit where they want to sit, choose who they want to sit with. We try to encourage Hivers to sit at different places daily as it ‘forces’ them to interact with different people.” John mentioned. Almost immediately, I jumped at the sound of this newfound term. I found it interesting that the term ‘Hiver’ was thrown on me on the very first day. I asked John how this term came about and his answer was almost instantaneous, almost like a reaction rather than a response of what he thought. “Oh, it’s a term that we call our members within the Hive. We hope by doing so we would be able to show them that the Hive is a place where they belong and feel part of.” From his answer and reaction, I question on whether this term was used too readily or perhaps given too easily.

Later on in my journey as a Hiver, majority of my conversations with other Hivers (in accordance to how John defines them) collectively agree that a Hiver is a term of endearment in which Hive members identify themselves in correlation to their belongingness and loyalty towards the Hive. In other words, these Hivers are saying that in order to be a Hiver, you will have to ‘earn’ it through the adoption of coworking elements (e.g. embracing community life, participating in Hive organized activities, interaction with fellow coworkers) within the space itself and showcase your ‘loyalty’ through the actions you do within and for the Hive. To me, this statement seems to hold an underlying meaning of regulatory structure clouded by this reinforcement of the ‘flexibility’ and the ‘freedom’ to choose who they want to be. The terms ‘earn’ and ‘loyalty’ was something I hear often in the Singaporean culture. In other words, the ‘forcing’ of their Hive identity seem to be of no difference to that of an organizational control within a bureaucratic firm (Alvesson & Willmott 2002; Barker 1993). Interestingly enough, the unawareness of this control is somewhat integrated into the mindset of the Hivers in which one of them mentions “… Ever since I’ve joined the Hive, I’ve been taught to sit
with a different person daily and discuss something new. I feel that is part of what Hive’s culture is, and what the space is for: The possibility of meeting the unknown.” The incorporation of such mindset through the word ‘taught’ shows me that the basic elements of ‘conformity’ and ‘control’ are residing within the space. The use of the terms ‘earn’, ‘loyalty’, ‘taught’ from several of the Hivers makes me think that in order to be part of the Hive family, certain attributes, values and actions that are deemed to be ‘Hive worthy’ have to be taken into consideration.

As we walked past the Ballroom to head to the kitchen, people were acknowledging our presence by waving and saying hello. As we walked past the kitchen, there was a huge tent with beanbags in every colour possible laid out on artificial grass. John mentioned that they named it the Ideas Tent as it’s where they want people to “actively communicate while being in a relaxed environment”. By the tent there was a hammock, which I found interesting. John mentioned that the hammock was there “whenever anyone needs a break and wants to take a nap”. We headed into the kitchen where there was group of coworkers having lunch together and engaging in small talk. The kitchen was large, with state of the art kitchen stove, a glass fridge, coffee maker, a dishwasher and had most kitchenware that you would most probably find in a Masterchef kitchen. At the corner of the kitchen was a ping-pong table and a couple of bikes hung up on the wall, a place where as John calls it “for fun, leisure and relaxation, just like at home”. 

Figure 4.2: The Kitchen
4.2.2 Mixed Bag Lunches

One of the key highlights of the Hive is the weekly events that happen weekly. For the Hive, these social events consists of Mixed Bag Lunches on Thursdays as well as Friday Wine Downs. The Mixed Bag Lunches adopt the ‘potluck’ analogy where coworkers are encouraged to bring a dish according to the theme set by the community catalyst. According to John, the reasons behind these events seek to ‘promote social interaction’ as well as ‘forging tighter community bonds’. It may seem though that some coworkers do seemingly attend these events for ‘the free food and alcohol’, as mentioned by one of the members cheekily.

My first experience of the Mixed Bag Lunch offered me an insight of what coworking life. It was vibrant, full of life and I felt excited to hang out and chat with the coworkers who were there. As I got in line to get my food, I could smell the whiff of curries and looking down I could see trays of curries, rice and naan bread. I could hear the lady behind me exclaim, “Thank god the theme is Indian, been craving curries for a while now!” I later found that to keep it interesting, the community catalysts change the theme on a weekly basis and will post it on Yammer midweek to let the Hivers know what the new theme is. While I sat down on the big dining table in the middle of the room, I could see people chatting with laughter in the background, the sound of cutlery clanging on plates, the smell of the curries. At that moment, I felt like I actually belonged. You know that warm and fuzzy feeling you get when you have dinner with your family, it was exactly that feeling. I felt like I was part of something and it made me feel good, really good. I felt a tap on my shoulder and I turned with a young black haired girl with a smile that could light up the room.
I found out later her name was Nessie and she is the space lead for the Hive. We started chatting and she said “Nearing the end of the lunch, John normally does announcements and it is customary for you to make a speech seeing that you’re new. It is a rite of passage for every new Hiver!” Almost straight after Nessie said that, John started clinking his glass and announcing Hive related things such as broken plumbing on Level 2, and book event organized by one of the start-ups within the Hive, etc. Straight after came the moment I was dreading, I hated speaking in crowds, especially when it is in a new and strange environment. As I stood up to speak, I could feel everyone’s eyes on me, “Hi my name is Abigail Wong and I am a researcher from RMIT University. I am conducting studies in regards to identity construction within coworking spaces and I hope you guys would be able to guide me through as I am pretty new to coworking!” The response was warm and inviting, they clapped and one Hiver yelled out ‘We’ll take care of you alright!’ It was fun, light and most importantly, welcoming.

These weekly social events do in fact facilitate interaction and do serve as I might say, serves as ‘a rite of passage’ (as mentioned by Nessie) into the Hive family. According to several Hivers, it may seem that this ‘rite of passage’ is in reference to newly-joined Hivers who are invited to attend the weekly social events just so they get acquainted with other members as well as introducing them to Hive’s culture “John invited to attend the Mixed Bag Lunch when I first joined and I have been doing so every week” one of the members mentioned, “it gives me a chance to take a break from work and hang out with my fellow coworkers”. That reference, in some ways, is likened to the rituals we perform as we go through the process of liminality. For example, when we come of age, or entering the next phase of our lives through social rituals such as weddings, 21st birthdays, etc. This particular ritual of attending the Mixed Bag Lunch or a Friday Wine Down is seemingly used as a bridge to invite the newly joined coworker into the coworking ‘family’.
However, it may seem that the introduction of this ritual may win over potential Hivers who religiously attend and fully embody the Hive culture; there are those who see no value in attending these events. From conversations with several members, I call them members as I liken the term ‘Hiver’ as to those who are completely immersed and embody the identity as a community member of the Hive through active participation of Hive’s events and community building (further explained in this chapter), they mention that “I’ve attended the Mixed Bag Lunches once when I first joined Hive, and it's good... However, with work being so busy I just don’t have the time to waste socializing.” As well as “I attend the organized events once in a while, but only when I have the time.” These remarks made by the members show and demonstrate the lack of identification and embracement of the Hive’s efforts to promote what they call a ‘family’. Without the same values and a shared understanding among its coworkers, elements of ‘community’ and ‘family’ doesn’t seem to projected through the actions of these members, this makes the Hive nothing more than just a serviced office space.

Superficially, the design and environment of the Ballroom coincides with the concept and ideals of a coworking space, which in turn corresponds with existing coworking literature (Hurry 2012; Kwiatkowski & Buczynski 2011a, 2011b; Spinuzzi 2012), where the physical environment facilitates the notion of vibrant community life, regardless of the facilitation orchestrated by the community catalysts. This symbolic meaning of a community is reiterated through the artefacts, the design of the space and even the people around (Butcher 2013). The open working space and environment both reveal that the ‘open’ concept of coworking goes against the traditional, structured outlook of a bureaucratic firm. As mentioned by a Hiver, “I love sitting here because it allows me to view the entire space, no one is hidden from sight and you can see who is entering the space.” I can relate to that seeing that that was one of the main reasons to why I chose my seat in the Ballroom. It could stem from my want to belong and be part of the community seeing that my Singaporean
experiences and background doesn’t offer that. Being a social person deep down, I enjoyed the process of meeting new people from diverse backgrounds and this ‘want’ is what drives me to connect with the people who want the same things I do. From the vibe given, I feel more at ‘home’ in the Ballroom and I feel comfortable to ‘be who I want to be’. From my perspective and my time spent there, the outlook of the Ballroom celebrates and embraces the coworking identity where the ‘socialness’ of the environment is at its peak which is clearly represented internally, through the social interaction and vibrancy of its members as well as externally, through the structure and ambience of the space. In the words of another Hiver who perfectly puts it, “The Ballroom is where we gather to socialize, share our ideas, as well as work together.”

4.2.3 The Second Level

The vibes from the Ballroom were exactly what I had expected. I was feeling an all-time high. “So far,” I thought to myself, “This is definitely hitting all expectations I have had on what a coworking space is.” After our tour of the Ballroom, John said, “We have just recently expanded to the level downstairs to accommodate to the growing number of members we have. Would you like to go have a look?” As we exited out of the lift of the second floor, John and I entered through another smaller wooden glass door. He flashed his swipe card and we entered into a completely different environment. “I am very proud to introduce to you our newly revamped second level. The Hive has recently added a second level to keep up with the growing amount of coworkers and to provide a better space for them to work in.” John exclaimed proudly.
Upon walking in, the atmosphere was tense and intimidating, with an air of seriousness coming from each individual. Stark white lights hung over the top of a massive desk space in the middle of the room where individuals were seen working. On the sides, there were cubicles of rooms with clear glass mirrors with at least 2-5 people all with heads buried into their laptops and computers. There was an unspoken silence that people there were only there to work and not be disturbed. I wanted to ask questions as I found that stark differentiation quite puzzling, it seems like compared to the ballroom above, it seems like I’ve stepped into a completely different world which reminded me of a no-nonsense office space, similar to that of a traditional organization that I worked for whilst in Singapore. It was so quiet that you could hear a pin drop. My conversation with John had to drop down to a whisper for fear of disturbing the peace. As we proceeded through the second level, there were 2 meeting rooms at the back with an elevated napping area for coworkers who work on the second level. The only connection with level 2 and 3 is the connecting stairwell that led into the kitchen. Coworkers from the second level head up there if they seek to utilize the kitchen.
During my time spent at the Hive, I have to be honest and say I try to avoid the second level as I didn’t feel comfortable with the vibe projected from within. I did make an effort and tried to work downstairs whenever I could, that meaning I would spend at least 1-2 days a week downstairs in order to understand and make sense of this disparity. During my time spent there, I felt that the ‘tension’ around the space made it difficult to interact. It may seem that most of the members who choose to work in the second level ‘do not want to be disturbed’.

Majority of the members that I’ve had conversation with, mention that the second level allows them to concentrate on what they are working and not be disturbed. Most of the teams situated on this level seemed to be caged up within their glass rooms, barely coming out to interact with those who are seated in the flexible seating. However, I did manage to interact with people from the second level seeing that they do come up through the back stairwell to the kitchen (where I often hang out with other Hivers) which is located in the Ballroom. A couple of them did give off the ‘I’m just here for a drink or to get some food, don’t bother talking to me’ vibe whereas some of them would stay and chat about their jobs and life in general before scooting down to their office through the back stairwell. According to my observations, only two out of ten people who enter the kitchen from the level below seek to actively want to socialize with those from the upper level. This struck me as puzzling as I often thought why be part of a coworking space if you don’t seem to want to embrace the benefits that it offers? It was only later on in my journey that I found out the reason why, and the reason being was, most of them were only here for a space to work outside their homes, they see it as a service office space. While this seems like a claim at the moment, it can be better understood later on in this chapter when I go deeper into determining the identity constructs of the coworkers in the Ballroom as well as in Level 2.

Over the period of my observation at the Hive, it seems that Ballroom and the Second level emitted completely different vibes. The conflicting physical environment between the
Ballroom and the Second level portrays a huge disparity between the two spaces. The second level conflicts with every aspect of what coworking represents, from its physical layout emulating a traditional organizational space to the surrounding tense atmosphere and ambience. This confliction brings me back to a term that we use in Identity theory and that is Othering. By Othering, I mean any action by which an individual or group becomes mentally classified in somebody’s mind as “not one of us” (Brewis 2005; Canales 2000; Riach 2007).

In this instance, the separation of the two floors, demonstrate the Hivers are othering to the ‘Corporate’ members and vice versa. The separation of the two worlds can be seen that the physicality of the space is divided between two groups – the Hivers (the ones of Level 3 who embrace the coworking identity) and the Hive members (the ones on Level 2 who have corporate identity elements).

Canales (2000) identified two types of Othering, Exclusionary Othering and Inclusionary Othering. On one hand, Exclusionary Othering often uses the power within relationships for domination and subordination, where stereotypes and the visibility of one’s Otherness (e.g. skin colour, accent, language, age, etc.) come into play. On the other hand, Inclusionary Othering is used as a process that attempts to utilize power within relationships for transformation and coalition building, where the sense of community, cohesion and inclusion is strongly emphasized (Canales 2000). Candales (2000) also states that neither one is mutually exclusive and both categories could be concurrently present within the same organization or institution. In reference to the Hive, it is evident that the two types of Othering is present through the representation of both the coworking and corporate identity categories as stated above.

As I mentioned previously, as defined by the Hivers themselves, Hivers are the ones who ‘embrace the coworking identity’. When I speak of coworking identity, it is the reflection of those who are willing to fully embrace and immerse themselves within the culture of a
coworking space, where main emphasis is put on community building, social cohesiveness and engaging in collaborative tie-ups. On the other hand, the corporate identities, which I identify as Hive members, are those who are indifferent to the coworking culture and unknowingly ‘bring over’ the professional identities that they’ve constructed while they were still within their bureaucratic firms into the Hive. These members are still caught in the world where they seek to align themselves with traditional organizational norms such as appropriate dress code and behaviour from within. Also, the second level is where all of the private studios are, which I metaphorically describe as a ‘caged up box’, where members who work within seem to give off an exclusionary vibe of not wanting to be disturbed (Collinson 1999, 2003). One such member who worked in the private office mentioned ‘I stay in my room all day because I have a lot of work to do, I only head upstairs to get coffee from the kitchen’.

The meaning of the word community is represented as a social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists (Kwiatkowski & Buczynski 2011a). The integration of othering is socially problematic within the coworking world as it contradicts the very essence of coworking which is the emphasis on community life. Seeing that a tightknit community is based on group cohesion of the members and the shared meaning of the space, it does not seem to be reflected consistently throughout the Hive. On top of that, the notion of the ‘back door’ connecting the second level with the third is metaphorically represented as a passage to enter the kitchen unnoticed, sneakily even. It represents social exclusion, which counters the concept of coworking where the importance of socialness and interaction is constantly enforced. From my observation, I can deduce that the facilitation of the physical space is essential in the very aspect of coworking. The confliction of the two spaces brings about confusion as both spaces represent very different organizational ideologies. While the Ballroom does echo the notion of coworking, the second
level says otherwise. From this insight, I can gather that the separation of the two spaces does play a part in shaping the identities of the Hive members.
4.3 The Hive’s Culture & Image

Over the course of 3 months, I looked around and found little that the ‘Hive Spirit’ was very much alive and are represented through different artefacts, no matter how small they were.

Marketing brochures and catalogues emphasize that the Hive was a place to: Work, Collaborate & Create are hugely broadcasted in bright yellow. They further emphasize that their core values of their coworking place constitute of the following: Entrepreneurial, Collaborativeness, Openness and Autonomous through banners, slogans (Driving Innovation through Collaboration) and catalogues.

*Cultural Artefacts & Projected Image*

Coworking culture represents the *like-mindedness of a community* and represents the social aspect of a coworking space. According to Hatch and Schultz (2001), culture is formed through the emphasis of values and beliefs that are passed down from a dominant individual (e.g. management) to the rest of its members. As these values and beliefs get embedded into the subconscious minds of members, they become ingrained as part of the organization’s identity. Therefore, in order to explore the Hive’s culture, I sought the community catalysts’ perspective on Hive through informal interviews as well as through conversations. It is essential to determine the sort of values management (community catalysts) of Hive is passing down to its coworkers.
On my first day as an official Hive member, John gave me an insight into the background of the Hive, touching on what Hive stands for, what it represents and how it works:

“Hive is very different from other traditional work places as we focus a lot on collaboration with each other. A space is only a space but with added culture in it, it becomes a community where ideas can be shared and explored. That’s the essence of The Hive as we not only want to provide a space but also a space where people can freely share their ideas and inspire each other.”

“The key elements of the Hive are that we focus on creativity, entrepreneurship and the social aspect. Most importantly, the social capital is what we hope would change and redefine the way we work. How we communicate and interact with our coworkers is the basic foundation of every organization. But sadly, most organizations don’t concentrate on the social capital but rather on profitability and performance of the organization. Here at the Hive, we see each individual as of value to our space, where each and every one can bring something fresh and creative every moment they spend here.”

“The difference between other organizations and the Hive is that because of their structure and control. Most organizations have their own innovation departments, where they have people who are assigned to brainstorm and come out with new innovative strategies. Most of these organizations are often resistant to change, due to traditions, rules and regulation. People are often restricted from expressing new ideas and structures as they are constantly bound by the control of the organization. At the Hive, we allow and welcome creativity and collaborative tie-ups. In fact, we often encourage and facilitate our coworkers into sharing ideas and to collaborate if they do share the same industry and interests.”

“The beauty of the Hive is that we promote and encourage diversification. In a sense, diversification can mean a lot of things such as diversification of their job roles, their
industries, etc. In other coworking spaces such as Gestault, they tend to lean towards taking in coworkers who come from the same industrial background, mainly IT. For us, we feel that as long as you embrace the coworking spirit and culture, we accept you and what you do. We don’t judge."

Subsequently, I approached two other community catalysts, Nessie and James to gather a little more insight as to what The Hive means to them:

“The sort of culture of members is sort of different; people are sort of newer here. It’s sort of a new, emerging culture. The Hive is more established compared to other coworking spaces in Melbourne as it’s got quite a strong and established sense of coworking. Members and teams work together and have fun together, just like one big family.”

“I think really what’s at the heart of Hive is around this wanting to create a community that actually works on problems differently. Creating a community that actually collaborates around issues.”

“It’s a different style of working together (compared to a traditional workspace). It’s where you will actually engage in a project with someone, that’s sort of inherently a creative project but neither of you have the full understanding of where do we go. And through collaboration is a way of sharing those ideas and building a strong level of trust, openness and honesty. It’s sort of building a relationship and those are the building blocks.”

“That’s sort of the diversity of our community, is the different people working on different projects. There are business consultants, lawyers, creative designers, people who are doing work with corporate organizations out of this space.

From John’s excerpt, he mentioned that “social capital”, which represents the social relationships within the organization, is the most important aspect within The Hive. It is
evident that the ‘socialness’ of a coworking space is one of its dominant cultural attributes of The Hive. Terms such as ‘community’ and ‘collaboration’ suggests that these social aspects are ingrained culturally into the formation of The Hive’s culture. Additionally, organizing weekly social gatherings such as Mixed Bag Lunches and Wine Down Fridays can be seen as an effort in driving the ‘socialness’ of the Hive. Artefacts such as stickers ‘Hivers do epic shit’ and slogans such as “Driving Innovation through Collaboration’ reinforces the Hive spirit in regards to community building, social cohesiveness and collaboration as well as building relationships with other coworkers.

The promise of community life, alongside with collaborative prospects with other fellow coworkers, can come across as both equally enticing and exciting. These attributes are what attracts most of Hive’s members, with majority of them being entrepreneurs, freelancers, and small start-ups from diverse industrial backgrounds. The thing about ‘diversity’ is that it is strongly represented within the Hive’s culture. “Here at the Hive, we promote diversity!” John exclaimed proudly. I begin to question whether diversity is a positive or negative thing. To me, the connotation of the word ‘diversity’ could represent, in the form of its members, coworkers who come from different industries and possess different skills and experiences. It could also mean the diverse cultural, racial or even religious backgrounds these coworkers originate from. As stated by a couple of the coworkers, “It is interesting to meet people from different backgrounds” and “You gain so much knowledge about other industries from the people around you” showing that in this sense, the meaning of the word diversity has a positive connotation to meeting people from all walks of life culturally and ethically possessing skills and experiences from different industrial backgrounds.

The findings show that this complexity of the term ‘diversity’ may be an issue to the Hive in the long run. At the moment, the use of the term can be seen to be used as part of their marketing activities, in the hope of creating an image whereby they are seen to welcome a
diverse range of people from different backgrounds. This portrayed image may contain underlying meaning. By opening their doors to the general public, it gives them an open reign to anyone who is willing to be part of the coworking family and culture, which in turn, increases business revenue and caters towards plans for expansion. As discussed later in this chapter, this could lead to the gradual loss of coworking elements within the space.

From my observation over a period of three months, I can see that aspects of coworking culture and image are promoted externally to not only potential coworkers but also internally to the members of the Hive. The complex identity tension between the culture of the two floors (level 2 and the Ballroom) creates image confusion for the Hive. This image portrayed is not a consistent one in terms of the space and the coworkers within. Hence, the groupings (e.g. level 2 versus the Ballroom, coworkers versus corporate identities) that are formed are socially problematic within the walls of the coworking space, seeing that they don’t reflect and are not coherent with each other. In reflection to Hatch and Schultz’s Organizational Identity Dynamic Model, they mention that the identity of an organization is the reflection of a consistent culture and image, where all three entities are constantly reflecting and mirroring the organization’s identity (Hatch and Schultz 1997, 1999, 2002). In this instance, the inconsistencies found in the Hive’s culture are affecting its image which in turn affects the identity portrayed by the Hive. In summary, the ideal coworker embraces the notion of coworking through the their actions and attitudes towards being part of the community by actively participating in Hive related activities, constantly collaborating with their fellow coworkers, as well as the development of innovative projects. While that is required of the members of the Hive, whether or not it is reflected within through its coworkers will be discussed later on in this chapter through coworking archetypes.
4.4 Setting the Scene

In order to ‘set the scene’ and provide a comprehensive understanding of what the Hive offers to its members, this section of the Findings will provide a description of the amenities and social events made available for the members of the Hive. Table 1.1 offers a detailed summary of what is made available to the Hivers within the space:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amenities for Hive members</th>
<th>Photo Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible desks, private desks and studio coworking options</td>
<td>Flexible Desks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexible Desks</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworkers who are on the casual membership are encouraged to freely seat themselves in any part of the ‘ballroom’ (large space with random chairs and tables). The rationale behind the ‘free and easy’ seating was to encourage coworkers to seat next to someone new and interact with them for the day.</td>
<td>Flexible Desks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private desks and Studio Coworking</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the case where there is more than one coworker from the same organization, they would either hire</td>
<td>Private Desks (For Teams)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
fixed private desks for them to work together or hire the private studios to work together.

10 Meeting spaces ranging between 2 to 8 person capacity

Bookable event space for maximum of 40 pax seated, with data projector for presentations and kitchenette

Fully Equipped Kitchen

**Weekly Social Events:**

*Mixed Bag Lunch (Thursdays)*

- Mixed Bag lunches are organized every Thursday, normally from 12.30pm -1.30pm to promote community building. Coworkers who participate are required to bring a dish according to the theme
(e.g. Indian, Italian) set by the community catalysts who tend to notify them through Yammer (virtual platform for members of the Hive)

**Wine Down Fridays**

- On Fridays, coworkers are encouraged to bring their own wines or beverages to mingle and welcome the weekend together. It gives coworkers a good chance of socializing and meeting other coworkers.

**Bike Racks, Ping pong table, Napping/Meditation Spaces, Hammock for Relaxation**

*Table 4.1: Summary of Hive’s Amenities*

Other physical amenities include wireless internet, separate kitchenette for events, members lounge and breakout areas, shower facilities, stand-up desks and mailbox services

At the Hive, the virtual spaces include HALO, which was a virtual overview of the happenings at the Hive such as booking of rooms, current events in which Hive is hosting.
etc. Within HALO itself, there is a private social networking platform called Yammer. Yammer ([http://www.yammer.com](http://www.yammer.com)), a company that was founded in 2008, offers private social network services within an organization. Built from Facebook’s DNA, Yammer allows organizations to personally customize the type of network landscape catered specially for their organization using the basic structure adopted by Facebook. It allows the organization to: enhance conversations and discussions held by employees, facilitate content collaboration, connect and collaborate with external partners and clients all with a single platform. By doing so, it enables privacy within the organization. When new Hivers start out at the Hive, a virtual account will be set up and they will be allowed access to Hive’s HALO page and into Hive’s Yammer account.

Based on my 3-month observation, the utilization of The Hive’s virtual platform is mainly used as (i) an advertising platform (ii) problem solver (iii) communication between community catalysts and the Hivers. Often, community catalysts would facilitate and engage conversation with the Hivers through Yammer. As mentioned by John, the use of Yammer was introduced in order to ‘maintain contact and build relationships with Hivers around Australia as well as updating them of the upcoming events and functions that might be of use or beneficial to their start-ups’. It may seem that the use of Yammer does in fact inform and update Hive members about upcoming events and maintains its very basic function of communicative purposes. However, in my perspective, the key word in the term ‘private social networking software/services, lies in the word ‘social’. John also emphasized that ‘the use of Yammer would hopefully allow Hivers to forge a closer bond and a tighter community as the increasing number of members might seem to be a challenge in meeting every single Hiver.” At this stage, the use of Yammer is evidently lacking in the ‘social’ element in which coincides strongly with the culture, identity and image of what The Hive represents.
In one case that illustrates this lack of socialness was an encounter I had experienced with one Hiver. His name is Sam and he works for a social media consultancy within the Hive. When I met Sam, he seemed easy-going with a young ‘go-getter’ sort of attitude, dressed in jeans and a simple long sleeved strip top. I soon found that he had just graduated from Melbourne University in Communications and had just joined a social media start-up at The Hive. He ardently described his passion for the use of social media strategy within organizations and how his company assisted other organizations in dealing with such strategies as a marketing communicative tool. However, his strong opinion in regards to the utilization of Yammer at the Hive gave me insight in regards to the lack of socialness on the virtual platform.

“I’m not really active on Yammer as I should be, even though I am logged on to it most of the time. I feel that the Yammer platform doesn’t facilitate as much conversation as I would have envisioned or expected it to be. It’s the LinkedIn dilemma. You get this thing with LinkedIn whereas whilst it’s fantastic place, you feel like you need to be there, there’s not a lot of quality conversation going on, within a lot of sectors because it’s one of those things... It’s like being at a party when you’re 13 years old and you’ve discovered girls and girls discover boys and they’re on totally separate sides of the room. No one wants to make a wrong move, so no one moves at all. Well that’s the thing, when we look at personal virtual platforms, I would say like Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, etc., they are all at the opposite end of the spectrum in comparison to LinkedIn, which is a professional sort of virtual platform connecting all the different professionals together. To me, I would say my middle ground would have to be Twitter, because to me, it connects both my personal and professional life. I think, in my eyes, Yammer is still at the end of the spectrum, alongside with LinkedIn. It is still too professional especially seeing we are in a space where the lines of professionalism
are blurred due to what Hive represents. In my eyes, Yammer should be on middle ground, for both our personal and professional lives."  (Excerpt from conversation with Sam)

Following that conversation with Sam were several excerpts that were shared by other Hivers, which demonstrate the lack of the ‘social element’ in regards to Yammer.

“I don’t use Yammer much. For me, I only use Yammer when there is a problem that needs solving or advertising my events. I don’t use it much other than those 2 functions. The only people who use Yammer at the Hive are the community catalysts and a small portion of members, mainly the older members.”

“You see new people pop in and out of Yammer once in a while. But it only mostly lasts for a week or so. Other than that, you always see the same people appearing and reappearing. I don’t really keep track.”

“I don’t really broadcast who I am on Yammer. I see no need when I have other outlets such as Facebook and Twitter… Yammer just allows me to keep track what’s going on at the Hive and what events are available at the moment. Some of the events are interesting to go to.”

Figure 4.6: HALO/Yammer Platform
From the above excerpts, we can determine that there is an evident lack of ‘socialness’ in Yammer. There is still a seemingly cautious air of professionalism that members refuse to overstep as they might still see Hive as a professional environment. It is interesting that the fear of portraying who they are (personally) is similar to that of an individual within a bureaucratic firm. In comparison to the physical space, where there is a distinction between the two floors (coworking and corporate), the virtual space takes after the corporate front. The lack of socialness shows that the virtual platform is not coherent with the Hive’s culture and image as projected ardently by the management team as well as their external marketing materials.
4.5 Identities Constructed within the Hive - Coworking Archetypes

According to Hatch and Schultz’s Dynamic Organizational Identity model, the formation of an organizational identity is constantly at interplay with the culture and image of the organization. At Hive, both internal (culture) and external (image) of the organization emphasizes through its management (community catalysts), marketing and communication activities, and the need for social and work collaboration, community, diversification, openness and trust. However, this is based on a one-sided perspective of Hive’s culture, identity and image based on management’s outlook and external marketing materials (e.g. brochures, catalogues, and Hive’s website). According to Fiol, Hatch and Golden-Biddle (1998), the culture, identity and image of an organization addresses how they are realized and interpreted by its organizational members.

In this section of the Findings, I seek to determine how individuals construct their identities within the Hive in accordance to the culture, identity and image set by the management and its external marketing activities. While Gill (2013) mentions that while she introduces the entry of entrepreneurs and freelancers in organizational archetypes, she sees them as separate entities rather than a collective. The introduction of coworking archetypes allow us to see how these coworkers, comprising of entrepreneurs and freelancers, work together collectively in a space that, according to literature, differs from a traditional organization. The introduction of coworking archetypes also gives the reader a comprehensive overview of how the Hivers make use of the facilities and amenities within the Hive tocapsulate, or not, the culture of the space. These coworking archetypes aid the reader in understanding the identities are constructed within the space and how they consciously/subconsciously present themselves. The coworking archetypes that I have found through data collection are: (i) The Nostalgic (ii) Corporate Refugees (iii) The Outsider (ii) Self Imposed Exiles (iii) Collaborative Isolators.
4.5.1 Identity 1: The Nostalgic

The characterization of ‘nostalgic’ or ‘nostalgia’ is referred to a sentimental or wistful yearning for the happiness felt in a former place, time or situation (Brown, AD & Humphreys 2002). The reference to that term is strongly likened to those who were the pioneers at the Hive, the coworkers who were actively involved in the start-up of a start-up. These coworkers have embraced the concept of coworking since the establishment of the Hive. They are often seen actively participate during social events such as the Mixed Bag Lunches or Wine Down Fridays, stay back after work hours to clean, chat and hang out with others.

One story that stuck to me was Norman’s. Norman was in the financial industry for 10 years before he realized that he wanted to focus on a start-up of his own. He was also sick of the organizational life and as he mentions “I hate following the rules”. He joined the Hive when it started in 2010 and has loved the idea of working flexibly but found the idea of community life even more intriguing. His ‘loyalty’ to the Hive is unwavering as he narrated the good old days and how they used to stay back on Friday nights to drink and socialize. In his own words, ‘everyone had everybody’s back’. Hearing the way he spoke about the good old days and how exciting it was made me want to be part of that community he spoke so fondly of. I found that even though this group of coworkers may come in small doses, they exude an astronomical sense of community and belongingness to the Hive:

“I love the process of interacting with the different types of people I meet. I try to make the effort to meet a new Hiver every time I’m at the Hive. That’s my philosophy when it comes to coworking. You need to be open to meeting and mingling with people from all walks of life.”

“I joined the Hive because I know I am someone that doesn’t fit well in the traditional work environment. I detest the notion of fitting in the organizational norms and doing something you have to not because you want to. I loved, and I emphasize loved, the Hive because it..."
introduced a new sense of work environment, one that allowed and promoted creativity and idea sharing, one that doesn’t restrict you with the dos and don’ts of a rigid organization.”

However, as time passed, in order to accommodate to an increasing amount of members as well as to increase business revenue, the Hive made way for business expansion plans. This shift in the business model includes the introduction of the second level, change in membership pricing in order to manage the significant increase in the amount of coworkers they were taking in. Many of the Nostalgics felt that the change in the business model caused a shift in the culture and dynamics of a coworking space, where elements of coworking such as community building, collaboration and idea sharing were lost in the process. The following excerpts are conversations that I’ve had with several Nostalgics that support the above claim:

“I miss the old days where everyone used to hang around and chill after hours, where everyone knew everyone. Nowadays, it’s so hard to keep up as there are constantly new faces that pop in and out that you don’t really see as often.”

“I’m not saying Hive shouldn’t lose its business element, no one is expecting Hive to lose any money or not make money. However, losing its most important element is like a pie shop selling bread and not pies. The key selling point of a coworking space is the want to create a work environment where people know that they belong to a community. If I were a new guy joining a community such as Hive for the first time, I would be going around saying hi to everyone and getting to know the people around me. Sadly, nowadays, most of the newly joined Hivers don’t really do that, they don’t understand what it is like to be part of a community or how to act within one.”
“I always reminisce the days when we were a smaller group. It was easier to keep up with new people coming in. However, nowadays, it is way harder seeing that people don’t really make much of an effort in getting to know the community.”

“The size makes a difference. If you look at a private club, as a different example, you have a limited amount of members and so it never grows past that size most of the time. So there are 50 people or whatever it is. You’re always going to have that smaller social circle, whereas the Hive was never meant to stop at 200 people. It was always meant to grow, and I recognize that. It is a challenge to manage that amount of people and call themselves a community. It’s sad because those people who signed up for Hive as it is today will be very disappointed as Hive today is completely different concept from its yesteryear.

From my observations, the gradual loss of key elements of a coworking space such as being part of a community, idea sharing and collaboration is affecting the ‘older’ coworkers, primarily the pioneers of the Hive. These pioneers are seemingly nostalgic of Hive’s ‘glory days’ where the concept of coworking was at its peak. It may also seem that most of the Nostalgic are working towards revisiting the past by actively trying to promote and organize weekly social activities (Hive Runners, Hive Qigong) as well as facilitate conversation and community building through Yammer.

“I started a club called Hive Runners when I first joined Hive... Seeing that I had a strong passion for running, I thought it would be fun to do so with other people from the Hive. It slowly grew into a group of us where we would go running weekly. However, it has been a lot harder nowadays as most of the pioneers who joined Hive have moved on and are no longer with Hive. I am trying to get people to be more actively involved with activities around the Hive, but nowadays it’s been a lot harder seeing that the structure has changed comparing to the structure has changed comparing to the past.”
4.5.2 Identity 2: Corporate Refugees

During my time spent at Hive, I’ve often had conversations with Hivers that often use the term ‘corporate refugees’ to identify themselves. I soon found that the term ‘corporate refugee’, to them, meant ‘coworkers who have had experience in bureaucratic organizations, where regulation, structure and control are strongly emphasized, seeking for an outlet in expressing their repressed selves through the newly-introduced concept of working – Coworking. However, whilst breaking down the word, the term ‘refugee’ is referred to a person who has fled from some danger or problem, mainly from a political persecution. The use of such a strong connotation in reference to the escape of a traditional organization did make me question the reason behind the use of such identification: What were they escaping from? My conversations with and observations of several members allowed me to gather some insight as to why they identify themselves as corporate refugees.

“I see myself as a ‘corporate refugee’. I used to work in Company X as an E-commerce consultant for 8 years. I loved what I do but I hate the work structure there, it was rigid and you had to abide to the rules and regulation of the organization. I felt that that environment suppresses your chance for creativity. I’m someone who loves to keep challenging myself and being in that environment. At Hive, the social factor allows me to discover new ideas every day from coworkers who come from different industrial backgrounds, which allow me to act as a ‘free man’.

“Being at Company Y and Hive are completely different worlds. I’ll use spiral dynamics to explain. Spiral dynamics talks about how different conditions drive certain groups and people to emerge in different ways. According to spiral dynamics, Company Y would be a very blue to orange, they’re just arbitrary colours that they talk about. Blue is rules, structure and regulation, hierarchy, etc. Orange represents more of an entrepreneurial, freer sort of
structure and hippie green represents a more caring work environment, where emphasis on social factor is dominant in that particular work environment. Most of the people at Hive that I know are corporate refugees; they are looking for a way to distance themselves from the rules and structure of the organization. They feel stifled being controlled by larger, more established organizations. Hive leans towards a more orange-green colour which does in turn promote creative flow and freedom in making their own choices.

“Corporate refugees are those who seek refuge from organizational structure. I am well aware that I am classified as one of them as I used to work in Company Z and I hated the environment there. I hated the lack of integrity and control top management have over you. Sometimes it feels like they’re forcing you to do something you don’t want to but have to because it’s part of your job description. I want to work in somewhere where my opinions and input have a say in the way the organization is being run. And that’s when I ran into John at one of the seminars held by Hive and fell in love with the concept of working in a totally different environment.

From the above excerpts, it is evident that the use of the term ‘corporate refugees’ are used as a form of identification linking coworkers with their past organizational experiences in bureaucratic firms. The phrases such as ‘hate the work structure’, ‘distance themselves from the rules and regulations’, ‘seek refuge from the organization structure’ demonstrate that their escape is from what I call metaphorically, the ‘breaking free from the organizational prison’ (Collinson 1999, 2003), the traditional organizational structure that they used to work for. It may seem that the notion of coworking, a new phenomenon of working, allowed them to be who they want to be in the professional world without being tied down to the rules and regulations that an organization holds. In other words, they resist the notion of the corporate world by joining the coworking one (Edwards, P, Collinson & Rocca 1995). However, it may seem that these self-named corporate refugees are unknowingly bringing elements of the
corporate world into the coworking world through subtle representations such as their attire and their manner of speech. Consider the following excerpt from my field notes:

A couple of days had gone by and it dawned on me that the guy across me was always dressed in a suit. He had white-grey hair, had a tall built and was always dressed in a grey or black blazer with a shirt underneath. I would assume that he didn’t have to meet clients as he seemed to be always glued to his desk, head down whilst typing reverently and was normally on his cell. One day, I leant over and introduced myself and found that his name was Bruce and he rented the private desk across from me as he mentioned he ‘wanted a conducive place to work in, as he felt unproductive working from home.’. He mentioned that he ‘heard about Hive from a business associate of his and was keen to try out this new concept of working’.

Myself: Why do you wear a suit every day? You know we’re allowed to dress whatever we want here as long as you’re comfortable? I’m wearing my gym gear because it’s my most comfy attire!

Bruce: Yeah I’m well aware of that, but I’m just so used to it. I used to wear a suit to work all the time and when I don’t I just don’t feel like I’m going to work. Sometimes I wear a suit here is because I might have to meet clients halfway through the day and wearing a suit shows them that level of respect. But half the time, I wear a suit here because I feel like I’m not working without it.

According to boyd (2001), she states that fashion is a part of an individual’s identity. For example, a police officer wears a uniform to identify her/himself as a police officer, business professional dresses in a suit and tie to present himself in a professional setting. I’ve discovered that several Hivers seem to dress corporately, even though there wasn’t a fixed dress code at the Hive. This was an interesting finding seeing that these ‘corporate refugees’
detest the idea of anything corporate and regulatory, they were still adopting the elements of ‘corporateness’ into their coworking personas. It is evident that Bruce’s response to my question seems to illustrate that his mindset was still semi-stuck in the organizational structure of his previous organization. The sentence ‘I used to wear a suit to work all the time and when I don’t, I just don’t feel like I’m going to work’ shows that his adjustment to Hive’s identity is still an internal challenge to what he used to identify work with, which was his suit and tie. Along the same lines, one of the coworkers describes that dressing professionally did affect his professional state of mind.

“When I first came to the Hive, I wore a suit every day because that’s what I was used to doing in the corporate world. However, now that I’ve been at the Hive for almost a year, I normally dress pretty casual, seeing that no one really cares… However, I do need to wear a suit once in a while to meet with my clients, and when I do, I do subconsciously feel a little more important in it.”

From this insight, I infer that there is a deeper meaning to donning a suit to work. To the self-proclaimed corporate refugees, their interpretation of the escape from the corporate world to the coworking world provides them an outlet to enter into a new concept of work in which they are relinquished from the structural regulation and bonds that tie them to the corporate one (Fleming & Spicer 2003). However, are they really breaking free from their organizational prison? The subconscious connotation that by wearing a suit represents that they are working still shows that underlying layer of corporate norms may prove to be a challenge to shake off. It may seem that these refugees seek to find solace or even somewhat of an excuse to conform to the notion of coworking (Barker 1993). It may seem that their strong detest for the corporate world is unconsciously being modelled within the coworking one.
4.5.3 Identity 3: The Outsider

As illustrated in the identities above, the Hive is a place filled with an amount of opposing identities. Not only the physical space itself, but also of the coworkers, with the organizations they work for (corporate identity) within the Hive (coworking identity), so it becomes an identity within another identity. The following excerpts are conversations and experiences that I have had with one coworker:

“Oh, I love your boots!”

I looked up and saw an Asian girl staring fervently at my boots. She was professional dressed, in a corporate grey suit with and white collared shirt with matching black pumps. Her hair was tied into a neat ponytail and she had light makeup on. I soon found out that her name is Jamie and she works in one of the private rooms on Level 2 for a Human Resource Consultancy. I smiled back, thanked her and invited her to join me for coffee. The conversation soon proceeded to her time at Hive and the company whom she worked for.

Excerpt 1:

Myself: Do you often come up to Level 3 and hang out with others here?

Jamie: Not really. I normally come upstairs for coffee or getting lunches. Most of the time I come upstairs because most of our clients don’t know that there is a second level at the Hive and they normally turn up at the entrance of Level 3.

Myself: So you don’t really attend Mixed Bag Lunches or Wine Downs on Fridays?

Jamie: I’ve only attended once in the last year. It was because they forced me to as I was a new member then and they wanted to expose me to the social events at the Hive. Didn’t really get anything from it. Too busy to interact with most of the people here, having been shut in the bloody office all day.
Myself: So you don’t see yourself as a coworker or as part of the community?

Jamie: Not really. I see them as my colleagues and I do stop and say hello to others at times, but definitely not to the extent as being part of a community. I work here every day because my office is here and I see that as part of my workplace, doesn’t seem to make a difference to me. At the end of the day, my company is the one calling the shots not Hive. We’re just renting a space to work in.

From the conversation above, it may seem that Jamie’s persona in the Hive is a purely corporate one. The phrases “not the extent as being part of a community”, “my company is calling the shots not Hive” and even her dress attire, demonstrates that her ‘loyalty’ lies with her organization and not with Hive. The reason being, the Hive rents out private studios as work spaces for growing start-ups, who eventually starts hiring professionals who then start work at the Hive. Their main goal was to come to the Hive to start work rather than truly wanting to embrace and fully immerse into the coworking environment. Jamie’s mentioned that she ‘works here every day because her office is here and she sees that as part of her workplace’ demonstrates that in her mind, the Hive was nothing more than just a service office space in which she works in with her own specific organization. That statement alone contradicts everything the Hive stands for in regards to the notion of coworking. When spoken to other members who worked in the private studios, they all seemed to be in agreement with Jamie.

“To me, there’s not much of a conflict between how I am in Hive and my company. When I joined my company, it was already located at the Hive. I see Hive as a space that my company works in. The perks and benefits that Hive has are no different from my previous company.”
“Working at the Hive is just like working in an office for me. Once in a while, I do stop and have a chat with people but that’s pretty much it. It just so happens that when I applied for my job, it was situated at the Hive and that’s how I started working here.”

It may also seem that Jaime’s case is not the only example that demonstrates the confliction of identities between Hive members. Sometimes, confusion is also due to the member’s company being situated within the Hive, meaning that it is an organization within an organization. These two organizations, the member’s organization and the Hive, may seemingly have different organizational cultures, identities and images, with the latter leaning towards a more professionally structured one. During my time there, I have experienced members who suffer from identity struggles and are in constant negotiation as to which organization they belong to, as some of them do relate and enjoy elements of the coworking culture such as being part of a community and attending social weekly events. Further examples are demonstrated in the excerpts below:

“I love it here at Hive. I love what it represents. However, I don’t get much time to involve myself with the space. The only time I get to mingle around is when I head upstairs to the kitchen. We’re really busy most of the time and we rarely have time to socialize here... I mainly stay in our room (private studios) and work all through the day.”

“The Hive is different concept to any place I have worked before. I love the vibrant community life and meeting people from different backgrounds. Unfortunately I would have to say I don’t really socialise with many people from level 3 as I’m only there when I want to utilise the kitchen.”

The meaning of the word Outsider is often referred to as a person not belonging to a particular group, set, party, etc. or a person unconnected or unacquainted with the matter in question. In this instance, the term outsider is represented as those who work at the Hive but
cease to possess the coworking spirit. In other words, they are there to do their job, head home and repeat the cycle on a daily basis. As John mentioned previously, “a space is just a space but people are what makes the coworking space”. It may seem that these members are diminishing the value of coworking due to their working circumstance, seeing that their organizations are situated in the Hive. The distinct differentiation between the coworking and corporate identities has led to identity struggles for those who want more than a serviced office space. Their strong identification towards Hive’s culture can be seen through the expression of their words such as “love the vibrant community life” and “love what it represents”. However, it may seem that the lack of support from their individual organizations as well as an overwhelming workload may be reasons as to why they choose to stick to their own organizations and distant themselves away from the coworking one.

4.5.4 Identity 4: The Self-Imposed Exiles

The separation of the two floors (corporate and coworking spaces) demonstrated the coworkers’ reluctance to interact and embrace the coworking environment. Reason being is the choice that has been given to them to work away from the community by implementing the second level. In my opinion and observation, the introduction of the second level (corporate level) facilitates the divide between those who want to interact and mingle and those who are at Hive for a space to work away from home.

Self-imposed exiles seek solace in working alone, away from distractions. As mentioned previously, those who face conflicting identities mentioned that as they are there to work for their organization, they chose to stay clear from the concept of coworking and stick to the organizations that they are in. Others have also said they cannot be bothered interacting anymore as the growing number of people at the Hive is hard for them to keep track of the people they interact. Therefore, they choose to stay away from the coworking identity and
stick to their own organization’s identity. The following excerpts from various Hivers demonstrate the lack of wanting to socialize due to the reasons stated above.

“I used to socialize quite a bit but the dynamics of the Hive has changed due to the shift in management. It’s become so much more business oriented and corporate. I miss the old days where everyone used to hang around and chill after hours, where everyone knew everyone. Nowadays, it’s so hard to keep up as there are constantly new faces that pop in and out that you don’t really see as often.”

“When you start, you want to meet more people. You start on the third floor. That's really good because you bump into people and you can have lunch. Then you get tired of meeting people. I don't need to meet any more people. On level two, I can actually get work done which is for working with no one bothering me.”

“If you think about how much work people are doing, not everyone goes there to really work. A lot of people just come to socialize. For me, I need to get some work done. I'm usually come in, use a meeting room or work in the casual desks on level 2. However, I do admit I’m not a really social person and I come to the Hive mainly for that space to work in.”

From the excerpts above, it is evident that not only did the corporate shift of the Hive’s business model affect the attitude but also the growing number of Hive members served to be a challenge in regards to maintaining the coworking spirit. This form of alienation from the community on the pretext of ‘the need to get work done’ also contradicts the meaning and reasons of being in a coworking space. Without the essential coworking elements such as community life, social interaction and effective communication, it is of no difference to a serviced office space or even working in a coffee shop. What makes coworking unique is the socialness of the space, where the emphasis on creativity and collaborative tie-ups is fostered through interaction with fellow coworkers.
4.5.5 Identity 5: Collaborative Isolators

One of the key emphases of a coworking space is the ability to collaborate from different people from various industries. However, in reality, coworkers that I have interacted with would rather work parallel rather than work alongside with other coworkers. Based on my observations, I have not met one person who has collaborated at the Hive. However, that could be because I wasn’t there long enough or spoken to anyone who has. There are, however, coworkers who offered their services to help improve the Hive. For example, social media consultants who assist them with their virtual market activities.

“I have not collaborated with anyone here as it’s hard to get someone who knows my field (digital media) and I rather not mix business with my social groups. I come to Hive to socialize and I’m someone who does not like to mix business with pleasure. I would rather work with someone from the outside.”

“It’s a little more challenging to collaborate at Hive seeing that we are pretty diverse. People come from different fields and industries, which may not be applicable in terms of collaborative work. However, I have heard stories from places from Inspire9 (another coworking space)... their focus is on IT start-ups and that makes it easier from coworkers from within to collaborate and share their ideas.”

In my perspective, collaboration happens mostly when individuals come from the same field or industry. As John mentioned before, Hive’s intake of members are ‘diverse’, where individuals come from different fields and industries to come work alongside each other. However, I have heard that the concept of collaboration does exist in other coworking spaces in Australia who only selectively take in members who are specifically in the IT field. This identity may be a little subjective seeing that I have only been at the Hive for 3 months and only interacted with a small portion of Hive members.
4.7 Summary of Findings

The identities that were identified during the findings, suggest that the concept of coworking has been seen through *rose-coloured glasses*. In this instance, the term ‘rose coloured glasses’ is in reference to looking at coworking idealistically as demonstrated in the literature but in actual fact, is not reflected in reality. The data collected from this study has demonstrated that the reality of coworking is not an accurate reflection of existing coworking literature. Coworking literature has always emphasized on *redefining the way people work* *through community building, collaboration and the building of relationships* (Foertsch & Cagno 2013; Spinuzzi 2012; Tadashi 2013). This is partially evident from the perceived organizational identity of the Hive, which is demonstrated through its culture (management’s perspective) and its image (external marketing activities). However, the identity tension between the two floors has led to the representation of the coworking archetypes (Gill 2013) at the Hive. The term ‘archetype’ is defined as the combined meaning of an ‘original pattern’ of which all other similar persons, objects, or concepts are derived, copied, modelled, or emulated (Espejo 2008). These archetypes have been put into two identity categories, namely the coworking and corporate identity.
The dichotomy of the two identity categories shows that there is conflict of identity representation of the Hive (see Figure 12). This ultimately causes identity confusion, struggle as well as negotiation among its members (Barley & Kunda 1992; Kunda 1992; Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003). A coworker is defined as one who actively embraces and participates in all the values of a coworking space such as collaboration and community building. Through my findings, it is evident that the identity tension within the Hive has pushed coworking elements away while subconsciously introducing corporate ones.

From Figure 12, I have grouped the coworking archetypes accordingly to the identity categories that I have put them into. As mentioned previously, these groupings are a result of the complex tension of identity dynamics within the space. In other words, the culture of the Hive is a tense blend of both identity categories (coworking versus corporate) and this is what creates the image problem internally as well as externally. The groupings from around each categories lead to the ‘othering’ of the ones in ‘level 2 and the Ballroom’ and those who ‘are
coworking and corporate’. While my time spent at the Hive was short, I spent most of my time and had most conversations with the Nostalgics, Hivers who seem the most willing to spend the time to sit and chat with me. My time spent was mostly in the Ballroom as it may seem that this space is a reflection of who I was and who I wanted to ‘hang out’ with. In some ways, I would say I was drawn towards those who, in my opinion, exuded the coworking-ness of coworking and those were predominantly the Nostalgics and on rare occasions, the Corporate Refugees. While I did have interaction with other coworking archetypes such as the Outsider, Self-imposed Exiles and the Collaborative Isolators, interaction with them were curt and to the point, in which I sensed that there was a lack of want to build a relationship with me. Therefore, these categories are a creation of my ideals from my experiences of the realities of coworking.

It is demonstrated through the findings that the Nostalgics strongly identify to the essence of coworking. They are passionately involved in the concept of coworking seeing that their past experiences within the Hive have been a memorable one. However, while the Nostalgics fight to retrieve back their lost ‘coworking identity’, it is evident that archetypes such as the Outsider, Self-imposed Exiles as well as the Collaborative Isolators have demonstrated less coworking and more corporate elements through their lack of involvement and behavioural actions at the Hive. The introduction of these corporate elements is a result of the conflicting identities within the Hive as well as being too diverse in terms of the type of members joining the space as well as the reasons as to why they join the space. It may seem that the Corporate Refugees are caught in the middle of two categories. In other words, these coworkers can be described to be ‘sitting on the fence’. Seeing that corporate refuges are classified as coworkers seeking for an outlet in expressing their repressed organizational selves through coworking, there might be remnants of corporate identity subconsciously brought over from previous organizational norms. Depending on the type of influences and guidance offered
within the space, there might be a chance in them fully adopting the archetypes that is presented in either the coworking or the corporate category.

In summary, the identities projected from coworkers of the Hive do not seem to fully embrace the concept of coworking. If the Hive does not fully embrace the concept of coworking, it is a challenge for its coworkers to follow suit especially when they are constantly trying to negotiate the fluctuating array of organizational identities. However, due to the lack of time and resources, only one single case study has been conducted and the results are purely based on one coworking space. More research definitely needs to be conducted by looking into other coworking spaces or looking into how these coworkers negotiate their conflicting identities by determining a right balance between the two.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS
This chapter discusses the implications of the thesis findings in terms of conceptual framework and research objectives and its contribution to literature. The discussion draws the main points of the thesis to a close and presents recommendations and suggestions for future research.

5.1 Dissertation Summary

This research is a phenomenological study aimed to study the concept of identity work within a coworking space. It focuses on how identity is constructed by its members within the different spaces of the Hive, a coworking space established in 2011. The concept of identity work has been extensively explored by different researches (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton 2000a; Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep 2006; Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003; Watson 2008) all focusing on different outcomes (i.e. Degree of identification towards Organizational Identity, Identifying Optimal Balance between the Self and Corporate Identities, Negotiation of Tension between Conflicting Identities and Identity Struggle within an Organization).

On the other hand, the concept of coworking has only been recently introduced into the organizational world. It’s very fundamental focuses on the community life within a workspace where emphasis is placed primarily on collaborative tie-ups, social integration between coworkers as well as effective communication between management and its members. Seeing that majority of the research on identity construction has been conducted based on traditional bureaucratic firms where organizational regulatory enforcement is emphasized, the coworking environment would be an interesting avenue to research on in regards to identity work. Additionally, seeing that the concept of coworking is relatively new, there is an evident lack of coworking literature that has yet to be explored. My research seeks to understand how identities are constructed in this new phenomenon we describe as Coworking.
To enable the achievement of this aim, the following research questions were posed:

*How do coworkers portray their identity within a coworking space?*

*SQ1: What is the Hive’s organizational culture, identity and image?*

*SQ2: How do coworkers identify themselves?*

*SQ3: What are the different identities portrayed within the Hive?*

In answering these research questions, this dissertation has dealt with three extremely important constructs: (i) Identity Work Theory (ii) Organizational Identity Theory (Hatch and Schultz’s Organizational Identity Dynamic Model) (iii) Coworking Literature. The combination of the literature and theories from these constructs has led me to construct a conceptual model that would be substantial to this research.

Identity work theory allows me to explore the notion of identity work within individuals, where our self and social identities are at constant interplay. The adoption of Hatch and Schultz’s Organizational Identity Dynamics Model was used a basis to determine Hive Melbourne’s culture, identity and image as well as what defines a Hiver. Theoretically, coworking has always emphasized in ‘redefining the way people work’ through the notion of community building, collaborative tie-ups as well as a strong sense of social interaction amongst its members. However, through the use of ethnographic study, the findings of this research have demonstrated that the reality of coworking is not what it seems as how it is described in coworking literature; in this case, I employ to use the metaphor ‘looking through rose-coloured glasses’. The findings demonstrate that the confliction of identities (coworking versus corporate identities) within the Hive has caused an image problem as well as a confusion in the culture within the space.
Notwithstanding these fundamental issues, there are still residual elements of coworkingness within the Hive. The emphasis of the coworking culture is evidently displayed through its management (culture) and its external marketing activities (image). However, the most important aspect is the members within the Hive, as they do, how they react, and they believe gives ‘life’ to space, making it a Coworking Space.

5.2 Implications to the Hive

From the findings, we can determine that the concept of coworking is seen through rose-coloured glasses. The most important elements of coworking at the Hive would lean towards creating and enhancing community life as well as idea sharing and collaborative tie-ups (Kwiatkowski & Buczynski 2011a, 2011b). Even though coworking may be conceptualized as ‘anti-establishment’ and anti-organization’ (Butcher 2013), organizational elements are noticeably visible through the facilitation of the community catalyst where its managerial style is seemingly comparable to the way a manager manages their subordinates (Alvesson & Willmott 2002).

The growing number of coworking spaces over the years has brought awareness to the masses a new concept of working, which idealistically caters to those who shun from the bureaucratic structure of a traditional organization. In other sense, they are seduced by the idea of working in a space that relinquishes them from the structural reigns of a corporate environment, without fully understanding the true meaning behind coworking (Brown, Tj et al. 2006). The spike in the amount of coworkers has forced coworking spaces, in this case, the Hive to dramatically increase their intake in the number of members and to implement expansion plans to accommodate to the growing demand. The outcome of the growing size was the shift from a coworking to a more corporate culture and identity. In other words, the essence of coworking is slowly being lost in the process of building a coworking empire.
The main issue faced is the projection of different categories of coworking archetypes, the corporate identity as well as the coworking identity. This can be seen through the mix of corporate and coworking identities within the physicality of the space (The Ballroom and Level 2), the corporatization of virtual platform as well as insistent incorporation of coworking elements in the mental space (Hive’s Culture, Identity and Image). The Othering (Brewis 2005; Canales 2000) of the Hivers towards the corporate types solidifies the confliction of identities from within. This social division within a space that promotes the idea of community is socially problematic as the idealistic view of community life does not match up to the coworking reality. The findings have shown that the Nostalgics are well aware of the changes in the coworking dynamic, sensing a shift towards a more corporate one. In response to the shift, these coworkers can be seen to ‘act out’ by slowly transitioning their coworking identities to corporate-like identities such as the Self-imposed Exiles and Collaborative Isolators. The loss of coworking elements can be seen through the identity constructs of its members. Even though the management and external marketing activities (mental space) have constantly emphasized on the concept of coworking, its physical space and virtual space have evident remnants of corporate identity, most probably brought over from the “corporate refugees”, coworkers who used to work for regulatory bureaucratic organizations.

Another issue that stands out is the use of the term ‘diversity’ in terms of the intake of their members. The term ‘diversity’ has its upside and its downside. The upside could mean an open intake without restrictions in which would enable the Hive to flourish in both their financial and business models as well as opening their doors without discrimination in the type of industry, background or even motive in joining a coworking space. However, this liberal intake of members without accessing all the requirements as stated above could also lead to members who join the Hive without the right intentions, and that is to be part of a new
It is evident that the presence of identity conflict within the space has attributed to the loss of coworking elements within the Hive. This shift can be vitally dangerous seeing that the Hive is slowly losing its credibility in terms of what it originally represented, which is the idea of a community containing likeminded individuals who worked alongside each other. In the long run, elements of coworking would definitely continue to diminish or if not, completely lost, in the chase for corporate gains and business expansion plans. And when that time comes, the Hive will be nothing more than just a serviced office space. By taking into consideration the many issues that have been identified in this dissertation, combined with the underlying framework, it is possible to recommend a number of solutions to address these issues and incorporate strategies that would assist the Hive in maintaining, improving and constantly revising their coworking culture as well as build up their coworking culture.

5.3 Recommendations for the Hive

As mentioned previously, the Hive is currently undergoing an identity struggle in terms of identity confliction in its physical, virtual and mental spaces. This confliction is reflected in its members where confusion is demonstrated through the various identity constructs shown in the findings.

The following recommendations are:

(i) Separation of Coworking and Corporate Identities

Organized spaces with distinctly different social groupings cause identity tensions which leads to image problems and cultural confusion. The separation of the two worlds (the
Ballroom and Level 2) or the dichotomy of the coworking and corporate spaces needs to be physically rectified. According to the findings, the Ballroom exudes coworking elements in terms of the physicality of the space such as the ‘open’ desk space and shared communal areas that facilitates and contain a cohesive community. On the other hand, the second level exudes a corporate vibe where the notion of coworking is at its lowest. It is essential that The Hive incorporates the elements that are present in the Ballroom into the second floor, in terms of the physical layout as well as its environment. The idea of the private studios within these glass windowed rooms seems to give members working within the rooms a reason to disengage from the rest of the coworking ‘family’. By scraping these glass panels and incorporating an open concept similar to that on the Ballroom would definitely facilitate more opportunities for its members to interact.

Another issue faced was the ‘backdoor’, the only aspect that linked the two worlds together. By shutting the backdoor, it forces members to enter from the main entrance, walk through the Ballroom in order to head to the kitchen. This ‘walk’ would encourage facilitation between the other coworkers with the members that come from the second level, which will allow coworkers to forge closer bonds as well as a tighter community.

Additionally, the virtual space within the Hive has demonstrated the lack of ‘socialness’. This lack of socialness does indirectly promote a corporate virtual culture where the main uses of the virtual platform are only used for (i) problem solving, (ii) event announcements as well as (iii) a platform for community catalyst to inform members of news at the Hive.

Seeing that the Hive is expanding at a rapid rate and catering to a growing amount of coworkers, it is impossible to keep up with the notion of community life in terms of the physicality of the space. However, the virtual space, if utilized correctly, the outreach potential can be a driving force in forging tighter community bonds. As mentioned before, the
implementation of the network community through sub communities makes it easier to manage. By adopting the idea of sub communities onto the virtual infrastructure would also offer community catalysts an opportunity to induce and facilitate ‘socialness’ within the sub communities as well as under the ‘Hive’ umbrella (Beech 2011).

(ii) Culture of the Hive

Organizational culture is referred to the like-mindedness of a community and represents the social aspect of a coworking space. In this research, it also represents the Hive’s identity which is established through its culture (from the view of its management) as well as its image (external marketing activities). Even though the identity of the Hive may seemingly be coherent with the coworking concept, issues such as the promotion of ‘diversity’ as well as the awareness and understanding level of coworking is seen to be lacking within the space. From the findings, it is evident that the ‘diversity’ of the community makes it hard for members to find similar interests and collaborate with those from the similar field. Therefore, it is essential that Hive needs to be more selective in regards to the intake of its members. This selection can come in the form of industry specialization such as the IT industry or the media industry. It is also important to educate potential coworkers coming into the space about the concept of coworking through perhaps an introductory run through with the community catalysts.

5.4 Research Limitations

5.4.1 Limited Research Period

Using ethnographic methods as a research method requires a substantial amount of time to be submerged in the particular field. According to Pink (2001), the amount of time to fully understand a new phenomenon can take up to 1-5 years in the environment itself. However, due to limited time constraints this thesis entails, time restriction was a factor seeing that I
have only had 3 months within The Hive as a coworker. Ideally, I would have loved to be embedded within the coworking space for at least a year. However, the data collected during these three months can be used as a basic understanding of the identity of The Hive as well as the different identities its members construct from within.

5.4.2 Single Case Study

In order to make this research a more comprehensive one, it would have been ideal to be able to conduct ethnographic study to more than one coworking space, making it a cross case study. However, due to time limitations of this thesis, I was unable to do so especially since ethnographic research does take quite a substantial amount of time to be immersed in the field.

5.4.3 My Reflexivity within the Space

In ethnographic research, reflexivity questions our relationship with our social world and the ways in which we account for our experience (Cunliffe 2010). In this study, my reflexivity as a coworker and a professional who has worked in a strict and traditional culture came as a challenge. My preconceived notion of corporate life, which I hated due to the beaureaucy and stringent structure of the organization I worked for, made me excited to begin my research journey as a coworker in the Hive. It was a challenge as I tend to, even when I try not to, ‘take the side’ of those who portrayed evident coworking attributes and built up ‘imagined conflict’ when I sensed a lack of coworkingness in the coworkers I interacted with.

5.4.4 The Nature of Research

As this dissertation employed the use of ethnographic observational methods within an interpretivist approach, some would argue that the data collected would be deemed to be unreliable and questions the credibility of the research, citing that it is a one-sided opinion. However, as Alvesson et al (2008) state, the nature of identity is *too complex* and *too
processural of a character to be measured by quantitative methods. In their opinion, they mention that the methods most suited for the study of identity work would have to be interviews, participant observation and reading contextual cues and observation of behaviour.

5.5 Theoretical Contribution

This dissertation can be seen as a foundation study which can be built on by further research into this new phenomenon. In this research, I have taken theories from both identity and organizational literature to understand how identities are constructed in a different context of a working space, namely a coworking space.

Existing coworking literature has demonstrated that the benefits of coworking do promote positive outcomes such as creativity, idea sharing, collaboration, etc. (Foertsch & Cagno 2013; Green 2014a; Hurry 2012; Spinuzzi 2012). The principal contribution to the literature is by giving readers an insight into the reality of a coworking space through the coworking archetypes (Gill 2013) that have emerged from the findings. These archetypes have demonstrated signs of identity struggle and negotiation from within the space, which resonates similar outcomes to research on identity work within organizations (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton 2000a; Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep 2006; Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003; Watson 2008). From my study, it is evident that bureaucratic organizational elements such as othering (Canales 2000), conformity (Barker 1993; Fleming & Spicer 2003) and resistance (Collinson 1999; Edwards, P, Collinson & Rocca 1995) do exist within walls of the coworking space.

Additionally, this research can serve to be a contribution towards organizational identity literature in terms of identity work within coworking spaces (Ashforth, Harrison & Corley 2008; Bhattacharya & Sankar 2003; Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail 1994; He & Brown 2013). While Hatch and Schultz’s Organizational Identity Dynamics model encourages cohesiveness
and coherent elements in all three entities (culture, identity and image), this research has shown that the display of identity tension within the space can lead to image problems and cultural confusions. Therefore, this outcome shows that while people are what make the space, the space, in some ways, does affect how people act and construct their identities within the space. Also, seeing that coworking is a newly introduced way of working in organizational studies, this research could serve as a contribution in terms of a newly introduced culture (the coworking one) and how those within this culture (coworkers) construct their identity within the space.

5.6 Future Research

Seeing that coworking is a relatively new phenomenon introduced in both the organizational world as well as organizational literature, it is not a surprise that not much empirical research has been undertaken. And whilst the findings of this case study offer a basic understanding of coworking through emerging coworking archetypes (Gill 2013), more research has to be conducted in order to see if these coworking archetypes are present in other coworking spaces. Furthermore, a more comprehensive research has to be performed in order to understand why these organizational elements such as identity struggle, negotiation of identity tension as well as resistance and conformity are occurring within the coworking space. On a broader note, the lack of coworking literature is evident and more research has to be conducted in order to get a detailed understanding of what coworking really is.

5.7 Conclusion

At first glance, coworking is seen as an ‘anti-establishment’ and ‘anti-organization’ (Butcher 2013) through its emphasis on community life. However, this research has demonstrated that the concept of coworking is seen through, metaphorically, rose-coloured glasses. Deep
immersion into a coworking space allowed me to uncover conflicting results that go against existing coworking literature (Foertsch & Cagno 2013; Hurry 2012; Spinuzzi 2012; Tadashi 2013). According to coworking literature, the key aspect of coworking is demonstrated through community life, where it contains likeminded individuals who share the similar understandings of their values and goals. While coworking ardently resists the notion of being an anti-organization, the culture within the Hive seems to reflect otherwise. (Barker 1993)

From the findings, it is evident that while the organizational identity of the Hive, which is represented through the culture (management’s perspective) and image (external marketing activities), demonstrates strong coworking aspects. However, it may seem that the coworking element is diminished in terms of how the coworkers within the space construct their identities. The separation of the coworking and corporate identities within the Hive has caused confusion seeing that both spaces reflect conflicting elements. On the other hand, the lack of ‘socialness’ within HALO and Yammer have it being used purely for event advertising, problem solving, and a communicative platform community catalyst use for announcements to members of the Hive.

The confliction of the identities within the space has fallen into two identity categories: the coworking identity and corporate identity. While the coworking identity is referred to coworkers who embrace the notion of community life such as collaboration, active interaction with other coworkers and attending weekly organized events by the Hive, the corporate identity is referred to corporate elements brought over from the coworkers (namely the Corporate Refugees) and are represented through the lack of interaction with fellow coworkers as well as choosing to work alone away from the community. From my findings, coworking archetypes that were identified were placed in each respective category.
While coworking is gaining popularity and recognition in the business world as a ‘refuge’ from organizational regulatory structures, the findings of this dissertation offers an insight to the reality of coworking from a single case study. While the results show that the gradual loss of coworking elements of the Hive, the very elements that defines them, may result in the shift from coworking to a corporate structure, making them no different from a serviced office space. While this might not be represented in all coworking spaces in Australia, it gives readers a foundation as to the life as a coworker through the coworking archetypes found from this research. It is hoped that this research can serve to be a stepping stone to further research in the coworking industry (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton 2000b).
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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Research Plain Language Statement

College of Business

School of Management

RESEARCH PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Dear Potential Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University (Australia). This information sheet describes the project. The Hive has given their approval for the researcher to conduct this research at The Hive. They have also given the researcher full access to the facilities and technological platforms of The Hive. Please read this sheet carefully to understand its contents. If you have any questions about the project, please contact the investigator at the contact details below.

Project Title

The Hive: Identity Construction within a Coworking Space

Investigators

Wong Lijuan Abigail, School of Management, +61 4 21 660 810, lijuanabigail.wong@rmit.edu.au

Dr. Tim Butcher, School of Management, +61 3 9925 5142, tim.butcher@rmit.edu.au

Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being conducted?
The researcher of this project is a student at RMIT University in Australia and is supervised by Dr. Tim Butcher, +61 3 9925 5142, tim.butcher@rmit.edu.au from the School of Management at RMIT University. This research is being conducted as part of the Masters by Research (Business Management) degree and has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee.

Why have you been approached?

The purpose of this research is to be able to understand how individuals construct identity through the use of social networking sites within an organization. This research seeks to explore the construction of identity between the two spaces: real-life and the social networking platform (Yammer). You are invited to participate in this research to share your personal experiences and knowledge so a better understanding can be gathered of the roles of private social networking sites play in the construction of identity.

Selection Criteria:

You have been approached to take part in this study because you are active in the use of your organization’s social networking platform (Yammer). Participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time.

What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?

Research Objectives:

The focus of this research is on identity work and the adoption of Yammer within an organization. An individual’s identity is multi-faceted in which the way we portray ourselves depends largely on our environment and audience. For example, the way we act towards our loved ones in familiar surroundings (e.g. home) would not necessarily correspond to the way we act towards our coworkers in a professional environment, such as an organizational workspace. In other words, we tend to keep individual selves “locked up” and put forward our “professional” selves just so we can be part of the identity set by the group, in this case, the organization.
The core concept of social networking sites is built on the identity created by the individual user, identifying, connecting and forging relationships through technological networks. It allows individuals the freedom to express themselves and their identities through a technological medium. The introduction of private social networking sites (e.g. Yammer) has given organizations the opportunity to adopt the basic architecture of Facebook such as information sharing and interactive discussions within its designated perimeter. This research seeks to understand how Yammer would enhance one’s individual self-identity within the constraints of an organization through the observation of an individual’s online and offline identity.

Research Questions:

How do coworkers construct their identity in a coworking space?

- *What is the Hive’s organizational culture, identity and image?*
- *How do the members of the Hive identify themselves?*
- *What are the different identities portrayed within Hive?*

If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

If you are willing to participate which will be purely your personal viewpoint, you will be observed for a period of 3 months, and follow your Yammer account to see how you construct identity on different platforms. This research will be conducted in The Hive for 4 working days a week, generally from Monday-Thursday during working hours (9am - 6pm)

The research process may require you to be voice or video recorded for the credibility of this research. If you do not wish to be recorded prior to the research, please do discuss other available options with the researcher conducting it to discuss options (such as the researcher taking notes).

What are the possible risks or disadvantages?
The topic discussed will be your personal views on how private social networking sites affect the construction of identity. As this research focuses on identity work, the risk this research holds is that it may/may not be an emotional experience for you as it is necessary to identify who you are through discussions and how you identify yourself within and outside of the organization. Secondly, this research has the potential to be included in conferences and other publications. If you choose to keep your privacy intact, the researcher will keep information given confidential and use psuedonyms to protect your identity. However, due to the nature of this research (e.g. the use of public assisted (The Hive) platform of communication (Yammer), the researcher can’t 100% guarantee confidentiality.

Lastly, as an agreement with The Hive in exchange for their kind services and allowing their space to be subjected to research, they have requested for the data collected to be used in their marketing activities. Therefore, if you choose to be part of The Hive’s marketing material, you have the right to decline being in this research. The research will only commence when you are fully briefed of what the research entails and are willing to be observed and participate in discussions with the researcher.

In the event, you feel the uncomfortable with any aspect of the interview, please inform researcher of this project, Wong Lijuan Abigail at 0421660810, lijuanabigail.wong@rmit.edu.au or her supervisor, Dr. Tim Butcher, School of Management, +61 3 9925 5142, tim.butcher@rmit.edu.au. We will discuss your concerns and suggest appropriate follow up, if necessary.

**What are the benefits associated with participation?**

As it was agreed upon, a summary of this research will be given to The Hive for marketing purposes. The benefit that you can gather from this is an improvement in your The Hive membership and to create a better understanding of the The Hive’s culture. It would also provide the researcher a clearer understanding of the construction of identity within the organization.

**What will happen to the information I provide?**

Portions of the research might be recorded and notes made from the recordings. The data files will be kept in the researcher’s personal computer, which is kept at a secure location and passworded at all times. The data collected will be solely utilised for the purpose of this research. If you choose to be
identified, your name will be used in any publications. If you choose to remain anonymous, a pseudonym of your choosing will be used. The result will be disseminated in a minor thesis for the completion of the researcher’s degree at RMIT University and may also be included in conference presentations and journal articles. In reporting the results, data will be aggregated and participants will not be identified in any output that results from this research project.

The research data will be kept securely at RMIT for a period of 5 years upon completion of the project before being destroyed. You have the right to understand the progress of the project and the findings of the study. If you wish, the researcher will send you a short summary of the research findings after the completion of the study.

**What are my rights as a participant?**

If you choose to participate in this research you have:

- The right to withdraw from participation at any time.
- The right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that in so doing does not increase the risk for the participant.
- The right to have any questions answered at any time.

**Whom should I contact if I have any questions?**

If you have any questions, please contact the researcher of this project, Wong Lijuan Abigail at 0421660810 or S3250819@student.rmit.edu.au and Dr. Tim Butcher, School of Management, +61 3 9925 5142, tim.butcher@rmit.edu.au.
Appendix 2 – Interview Questions

College of Business
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PROBING QUESTIONS

1. Which company do you work for? Can you give me a brief background on your company?
2. How long have you been in the coworking space?
3. What’s your job scope like here? Can you give me a brief detail of your job scope in your organization?
4. Do you feel like a part of a community being in the Hive?
5. Have you worked in a traditional work environment before? If yes, do you feel that the Hive is different from a traditional work environment?
6. What do you like to do outside of the Hive? E.g. Hobbies, Activities, etc.
7. Do you feel like you can dress different in the Hive comparing to other institutions?
8. What does it mean to be a coworker at Hive?
9. Do you feel if there’s any difference between the Hive and a traditional organization (E.g. Deloitte)? If so, how?
10. How do you feel about the use of Yammer in the Hive?
11. What do you normally post on Yammer? Is it personal or work-related?
12. What are the advantages/disadvantages of using Yammer?
13. Do you feel if there is a difference in the way you portray your offline and online identity? If so, how?