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by

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Abstract

This research explores the relationship between the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s claims process and Victorian state school teacher stress claimants who have lodged a WorkCover stress claim, and are subject to the Victorian Accident Compensation Act 1985 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, as administered by the Victorian WorkCover Authority.

This thesis aims to generate a substantive theory grounded in conceptual understanding of how WorkCover stress claimants experience the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s stress claims process. Commencing without explicit hypotheses, data from in-depth face-to-face interviews is analysed using the Glaserian coding paradigm. The results demonstrate how participants attempt to resolve their main concerns while navigating the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s stress claims process.

Orthodox Grounded Theory is employed to conduct this research. Orthodox Grounded Theory, as developed by Barney Glaser, is inductive research methodology informed by the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism. Constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling and thematic analysis are used to construct concepts from the data.

The core category of ‘Continual Resolving’ was identified as a useful heuristic for the explanation of how participants attempt to resolve the tensions within the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s stress claims process, and was used in the construction of this thesis.

The findings show that participants found the claims process alienating, disempowering, overly procedural and lacking in individualisation. The findings are presented diagrammatically in the two main categories of Self and Structure.

This research contributes to the limited knowledge in this field, and suggests that further research needs to be undertaken to improve understanding of the complexities of
traversing the Victorian WorkCover Authorities stress claims process for injured teachers.
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Declaration

I, Wendy May Pollard, declare that this thesis, submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts from the Faculty of Higher Education, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, is completely my own work, except where otherwise referenced or acknowledged.

This work has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Wendy May Pollard
2012
Chapter 1: Background and Context of this Study

My interest in this research evolved from my own experiences of being a Victorian WorkCover Authority stress claimant and the perceived lack of research focusing upon the claimants‘ perspectives. This chapter presents the purpose, aim and significance of the current study and establishes the context for the development of the Grounded Theory of _Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!_ This chapter provides a general background to the current research, drawing on the extant literature on Victorian teachers and the Victorian WorkCover Authority‘s stress claims process. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the ensuing chapters in the thesis and outlines the structure of the thesis.

The primary purpose of this research, as elaborated upon later in this chapter, is to explore the relationship between Victorian state school teacher stress claimants and the Victorian WorkCover Authority‘s claims process, through empirical evidence based on the perceptions of the claimants. This exploratory study aims to contribute to the scant literature in this field.

1.1 Occupational Stress

Occupational stress is a significant health and employment issue (Young & Russell 1995). Kenny, Carlson, McGuigan and Sheppard argue that it is one of the most costly occupational health issues, citing a number of other researchers (Cooper & Cartwright 1994; Cooper, Luikkonen & Cartwright 1994; Cotton & Fisher 1995; Karasek & Theorell 1990; Kottage 1992; cited in Kenny et al. 2000) who support this statement. Stress-related claims are the most expensive type of Workers’ Compensation claim (Hanks 2008). They involve numerous implications for individuals and organisations, including potential serious physical and psychological illnesses for the injured parties and extensive loss of resources for organisations (Kenny et al. 2000).
Throughout Australia, from 1996/1997 to 2003/2004, the number of Workers’ Compensation claims decreased in all categories except mental stress, which increased by 83 per cent (Hanks 2008). Claims for mental stress increased by 12 per cent between 2001/2002 and 2004/2005 (Hanks 2008).

In Victoria, mental stress claims increased from 2,148 in 2000/2001 to 2,920 in 2003/2004 (Hanks 2008). Australia-wide, both the average financial cost and the time lost from work for stress-related claims are more than double the average of all new claims (Hanks 2008). Between 2005/2006, in Victoria, more than $133.9 million was paid on stress-related claims, excluding administrative and medico-legal costs (Hanks 2008).

Hanks (2008) comments that stress claims now appear to make up a reasonably stable proportion of claim numbers and claim costs. However, he suggests that it is possible that there could be further growth in stress claims if there is an economic downturn and an increase in the level of unemployment. Further, in the report, Hanks posits that mental stress-related claims are particularly prevalent in the government and community sectors, where they make up 20 per cent of claims’ (2008, p. 71).

Occupational stress in the teaching profession is a major concern; worldwide studies have concluded that many teachers experience high stress levels as outlined by Kyriacou in an article by Young and Russell (1995) focusing upon the return to work of injured teachers. Tuetteman and Punch also cited in Young and Russell (1995) believe that teaching is associated with levels of stress well above those found in the general population. According to Everly and Smith (cited in Young & Russell 1995), as much as 50 per cent of stress in a person’s life is traceable to the workplace, and according to Young and Russell (1995) Workers’ Compensation claims from teachers in one state (Victoria), were primarily due to stress and other mental disorders. According to the Australian Workplace Relations Minister’s Report, mental stress is a prevalent cause of Workers’ Compensation claims with 41.1 per cent of all education workers making stress claims in the year 2003–2004 (Workplace Relations Minister’s Report 2005).
According to Rudow (1999) the prevalence of stress is highly concerning, as it can have consequences such as an increase in the sickness rate (the sickness rate of teachers is determined by neurotic and psychosomatic disorders); absence (the sickness rate results in a high teacher absence rate); early retirement (early retirement due to sickness constitutes a significant cost for schools and the state; teacher's performance (stressed teachers do not perform as well); mood state (discernible in the teacher's mood change) and the social behaviour of teachers (depersonalisation between teacher and student, teacher and teacher, teacher and principal, and teacher and parent; interpersonal relationships are impaired). A plethora of surveys attest to the existence of teacher stress (Louden 1987; Oz Train 1994; Dinham 1996), and occupational stress in the teaching profession is of significant concern for teachers. International studies indicate that many teachers experience high stress levels (see Kyriacou 1987) and the International Labour Organisation (Cox & Brockley 1984) identifies stress as a matter of growing concern.

1.2 Stress Definitions

The concept of stress is much contested; it is a complex and loose term, commonly associated with negative characteristics, such as dysfunction, fallibility and personal inadequacies (Panckhurst 1982). However, stress should not be confused with the concept of 'burnout', which according to Freedman (cited in Ozga 1988), 'implies that at some point a finite amount of energy has been consumed' (pp. 133–145. The term 'stress' comes from the ancient Greek, Ponos (Selye 1978). Ponos, whose mother was Eris, was the god of hard labour and toil in ancient Greek mythology.

Rudow (1999) conceptualises teacher stress as _the general term for the negative emotions that are reflected in adverse demands of their work’ (p. 53). This includes emotions such as _anger, rage, aggressivity, irritation, frustration, disappointment, depressivity, and anxiety, in particular_. Kyriacou, (1987, cited in Rudow 1999) agrees with this conceptualisation. The literature does not sufficiently differentiate between stress, as a strain reaction, and chronic stress, as a strain consequence. Acute stress can occur in episodes lasting from one day of teaching up to approximately one week. Chronic stress can last for several months. It can be manifested in permanent anxiety, frequent sleeping disorders, repeated mistakes and an increased physiological activation
(high blood pressure, high pulse rate). Whereas the experience of acute stress could be limited to a school day, chronic stress also affects the leisure time of the teacher. Most epidemiological studies on teacher stress do not elucidate whether teachers were reporting predominately about acute or chronic stress (Rudow 1999). Cole (1989) notes that a definition of stress is political, with the stress condition being explicated in psychological terms as an emotional condition, as described by Kyriacou:

The experience of teachers of unpleasant emotions such as anger, tension, frustration anxiety, depression and nervousness, resulting from aspects of their work as teachers (Kyriacou 1989, p. 27).

According to Selye, (1978) the term stress has been loosely used and associated with many confusing definitions. However, for him, in its simplest and most generally accepted form, stress is "the non-specific response of the body to any demand" (p. 472) and "Stress is usually the struggle for the self-preservation (the homeostasis) of parts within a whole" (Selye 1978, p. 367). Homeostasis comes from the Greek homoiosis (similar) and statis (static): it can be roughly translated as "staying power" (Selye 1978, p. 13).

1.3 Stress Manifestations

"In its medical sense, stress is essentially the rate of wear and tear in the body" (Selye 1987, p. 1), and more generally, "Stress is essentially reflected by the rate of all the wear and tear caused by life" (Selye 1978, p. xvi). As an operational definition, "Stress is a state manifested by a specific syndrome, which consists of all the non-specifically-induced changes within a biologic system" (Selye 1978, p. 61). With its own characteristic form and composition Visible changes due to stress are elements of its form; they are additional indicators expressing the sum of all the different adjustments occurring in the body at any given time (Selye 1978).

Selye (1978) acknowledges that stress has a myriad of physiological symptoms, and can have long-term health effects if it is not treated. Bassett (cited in Spillane 1984) explains that stress-induced development of ischemic heart disease presents in two stages, and that the hormones noradrenaline, adrenaline and cortisol have a mediating role in this
process. Hormones have been theorised as having a role in inducing physiological and psychological responses to stress (Frankenhauser, in Spillane 1984).

Stress, as an illness, has physiological and psychological short-term, longer-term and severe symptoms (Cosgrove 2000) and effects. Some of these include palpitations, fatigue, respiratory infections, dizziness, blurred vision, insomnia, migraine, high blood pressure, skin rashes, menstrual problems, mouth ulcers, fainting, multiple sclerosis, atherosclerosis, chronic back pain, ulcerative colitis, hyperuricemia, anxiety, depression, upset stomach, and at worst, death (Selye 1978). Selye (1978) identifies symptoms of stress as follows: increased or lacking appetite, increased sweat excretion, accelerated pulse rate, general irritability, hyper-excitation, depression, dryness of the throat and mouth, impulsive behaviour, emotional instability, inability to concentrate, feelings of unreality, floating anxiety, trembling or nervous ticks, the tendency to be easily startled, bruxism (grinding of the teeth), stuttering or other speech difficulties, hyper-mobility, the frequent need to urinate, diarrhoea, indigestion, queasiness in the stomach, pain in the neck or lower back, sudden heart attack, nightmares, increased smoking, drug and alcohol addiction, nightmares; as well as a range of inflammatory diseases,¹ psychosis and accident-proneness.

The response to stress has a tripartite mechanism, which consists of (1) the direct effect of the stressor upon the body; (2) internal responses that stimulate tissue defences or help to destroy damaging substances; and (3) internal responses that cause tissue surrender by inhibiting unnecessary or excessive defence (Selye 1978).

1.4 Stress and Teachers (Teacher Stress)

Teaching is reported to be a very stressful occupation, as described by Woods (1999) who cites a number of other researchers on this subject (Borg & Riding 1991a; Borg, Riding and Falzon 1991; Galloway et al. 1987; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe 1977b, 1978a, 1979; Laughlin 1984; Solmen & Feld 1989). Others report that these are difficult times to be a teacher (see Smylie 1984). Rudow (1984) believes teachers are particularly

¹ For the diseases of adaptation, see Selye (1978), pp. 171–276.
affected by stress due to their role of a social helper, in a context where the nature and organisation of the job increases its inherent difficulty. Smylie (1984) exclaims that Teachers face new challenges and opportunities from increasingly diverse and needy student populations and that Demands on them to develop new knowledge and skills and perform new tasks are increasing rapidly (p. 59). This is exacerbated as expectations for school and teacher performance and accountability increase (p. 67). In their combination, the characteristics and conditions of teaching present increasingly stressful situations for teachers. These situations may have positive or deleterious consequences for teachers and for their work with students (Smylie 1984). Travers and Cooper, (cited in Woods 1999) report:

Teachers, as compared with other highly stressed occupational groups, experienced lower job satisfaction and poorer mental health … Teachers were found to be reporting stress manifestations that were far higher than … other comparable occupational group (p. 118).

According to Manthei and Gilmore, (cited in Woods 1999) stress seems to have increased in some parts of the world in recent years. This fact in itself suggests that stress is as much a social and historical issue as it is a psychological one, as Durkheim (cited in Woods 1999) showed with regard to suicide. It is a multilevel and multidimensional phenomenon, requiring a number of different theories for full comprehension, rather than an all-embracing theory or model (Woods 1999).

Woods presents a view of teachers and stress that identifies its immediate cause, in most cases, as follows:

The maladjustment of two or more factors that normally might be expected to work in harmony … An alternative view is of the “ordinary” course of events as one exhibiting the dominant climate harmony among a number of key variables, such as teacher and pupil interests, government, local and school policy; school climate; the demands made on teachers; the resources to meet them; and, the rewards to be gained by meeting them. A potentially stressful situation is set up when a teacher’s personal interests, commitment or resources not only get out of line with one or more of the factors, but actually pull against them … A variant on this basic theme is being pressed to do more
work, given fewer resources with which to do it, and then receiving no reward or recognition, and worse perhaps censure, when it is nonetheless accomplished (Woods 1998a, p. 84).

This section will present an elaboration of the sociological theorisation of stress as relevant to teachers, cognisant of Smylie’s (1984) observation—_that there is some evidence that counselling, training and other efforts to enhance individual coping abilities may bring some temporary relief to stress associated with teaching_. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is quite limited. Such interventions are directed to reduce psychological threats imposed by the characteristics and demands of work, primarily by altering how individuals perceive and interpret them. This approach does little to alter the stressful characteristics and demands of work that may be the genesis of the threats. While the strategies may be helpful, they are insufficient to prevent or effectively remedy the problems of stress in teaching as is elucidated in this thesis. In this thesis for definitional purposes, the position adopted will be that stress is a socio-cultural construct which can be understood from a micro, meso, macro, and meta level perspective.

### 1.5 Micro, Meso, Macro and Meta Level Factors Influencing Stress

A range of factors operates at a number of levels concerning the relationship between teachers and stress. Woods (1999) acknowledges the complex micro (related to social factors within the teacher’s biography and person), meso (related to institutional and other middle range factors) and macro (related to wider societal forces and governmental policies) factors working to produce teacher stress:

- At the micro level, there are factors concerning teacher commitment, values, career and role, and factors concerning ability and willingness to change and adapt. At the meso level, there are factors concerning the type of school, school ethos, neighbourhood, and teacher-student cultures. At the macro level there is the intensification of teacher’s work and its particular manifestation at a national level in government policy (Woods 1999, p. 138).
The meta level which is the theoretical understanding of stress is provided by Sergiovanni (1999). Some of the factors operating at the four levels and their many interrelationships will be outlined in the following section.

1.5.1 Micro Level Factors Influencing the Stress Condition.

Nias (1999) suggests that teachers are likely to suffer stress when their personal interests', (p. 223) commitment, and resources get out of line with or pull against key aspects of their social, economic, or institutional environments'. Nias (1999) posits:

When vocationally and professionally committed teachers are put under pressure from meso or macro forces to act in ways that appear contrary to their values, and so to their sense of identity, they feel stressed (p. 225).

Importantly related to the issue of workload, particularly overload, is lack of preparation or perceived lack of ability to perform (Sarason 1980 cited in Smylie 1999). Stress can prevail when individuals are (or feel that they are) ill-equipped to cope with problems in their area of work responsibility (Cooper & Marshall 1978a cited in Smylie 1999). It can also emanate from self-doubts and insecurities about one's competence to act effectively and to meet the expectations of others (Cherniss 1980b; Lazarus & DeLongis 1983 cited in Smylie 1999).

Role conflict as factorial in stress production is defined as _two or more sets of inconsistent, conflicting role expectations experienced simultaneously by an individual_ (French & Caplan 1972; Kahn et al. 1964, cited in Smylie 1999, p. 61). Work roles may contain internally contradictory expectations (McGrath 1983, cited in Smylie 1999). Smylie (1999) asserts that role conflict emerges when teachers are confronted with incompatibilities between their beliefs and values concerning teaching and learning, and the goals and expectations of education departments and governments. Studies have found that role ambiguity is associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation of students, and teachers' lack of feeling of personal accomplishment (Capel 1989; Schwab & Iwanicki 1982b, cited in Smylie 1999).
1.5.2 Meso Level Factors Influencing the Stress Condition

Hargreaves (1994) identifies a change in teacher culture as factorial in stress production. He poses the following:

A “new professionalism” is emerging characterized by a shift in values and practices of teachers and a synthetic relationship between professional and institutional development. Significant developments in the change of teacher culture, are a move from individualism to collaboration, from hierarchies to teams, from supervision to mentoring, from in-service training to professional development, from authority vis-à-vis parents to contract (Hargreaves 1994, cited in Woods 1999, p. 133).

Hargreaves identifies the phenomenon of ‘controlled collegiality’, which is enforced collaboration from above, in the interest of managerialism rather than the interest of the group. This can only lead to the alienation of individuals that are opposed in principle to such developments. He extols the need for more ‘collaborative cultures’ to aid in the formation of more positive relationships in schools, such as improved relations between supervisors and co-workers, which can be a source of workplace stress. Lack of communication and lack of social-emotional support from co-workers and supervisors have been found to intensify stress from other sources, particularly job overload (see Cherniss, 1980b; French et al. 1974; Katz & Kahn 1978, cited in Smylie 1999).

Several studies have found that perceived lack of control and a sense of powerlessness are related to tension, frustration and anxiety among teachers (Dworkin et al. 1990; Woods 1989a; Yee 1990, cited in Smylie 1999). Restructuring organisations can create a number of potentially stressful conditions. Change can introduce new roles and new performance expectations that conflict with other roles an individual is expected to perform‘ (Brett 1980; Latack 1989; Louis 1990; cited in Smylie 1999, p. 70). Change can create feelings of incompetence (Bolman & Deal 1991 cited in Smylie 1999) and evoke a sense of powerlessness. It can threaten an individual’s discretion and ability to influence their work environment (Lazarus 1996, cited in Smylie 1999). It can lead to quantitative and qualitative overload, challenging individuals to remain abreast of changing technologies, standards and performance (Cooper & Marshall cited in Smylie
Change may evoke stress by challenging the beliefs, values, attachments, and assumptions that create personal order and meaning in an organisation (Deal 1991; Schein 1985, cited in Smylie 1999, p. 71) and it may lead teachers to question their own capacities and competencies.

1.5.3 Macro Level Factors Influencing the Stress Condition.

Woods (1999) identifies the ‘deprofessionalisation’ and ‘intensification’ Apple (1986,) of work as factorial in stress production. These concepts are derived from theories of the labour process, with the theory of ‘intensification’ derived from Larson’s (1980) discussion of the proletarianisation of educated labour (Larson 1999). The argument is that as advanced capitalist economies seek to maintain and promote efficiency, the sphere of work narrows, high level tasks become routinis ed, and there is more subservience to the bureaucratic whole (Woods 1999). As teachers’ work becomes more intensified, they become deprofessionalised and de-skilled (Woods 1999).

Many of the sources of workplace stress are found in the nature and organisation of teachers’ work. Teaching is inherently prone to stress (Smylie 1999). It has been characterised historically by role conflict, ambiguity, and overload (see Lortie 1975; Waller 1932). Heck and Williams (1984, cited in Smylie 1999) describe the expectation on teachers:

[Teachers are asked to] assume multiple and often contradictory roles, including among other things, providing academic instruction, maintaining order in the classroom; attending to the social and emotional well-being of students; and meeting sometimes conflicting expectations of students, administrators, parents, and the community (p. 67).

Teachers must often reconcile the different demands of schools, State, and national policies while navigating the ambiguities of ‘postmodern’ shifts in social, political, economic and cultural relations (Hargreaves 1994, cited in Smylie 1999). They must contend further with concurrent challenges to long-standing, taken-for-granted knowledge, assumptions and values concerning teachers and schools as institutions’ (Smylie 1999). Combined, these general conditions and contemporary challenges
present potentially stressful situations for teachers; situations that may have negative consequences for them and for their work with students (Smylie 1999).

Generally, stress is associated with overload; that is, the perception that one must do more of a difficult task than time permits (Sales 1969 cited in Smylie 1999). McGrath (1983 cited in Smylie 1999) purports that stress may result from an environmental situation perceived as presenting a demand that threatens to exceed the person’s capabilities and resources for meeting that demand.

Overload has quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Quantitative overload refers to amount and pace of the work to be done and qualitative overload refers to characteristics and difficulty of the work to be done‘ (French & Caplan 1972, cited in Smylie 1999, p. 62). Teaching is highly interpersonal, and rests substantially on teachers’ sense of care and compassion. It requires teachers to expend much effort and to give in far greater amounts than they receive (Heck & Williams 1984; Yee 1990, cited in Smylie 1999).

Underutilisation can also be an important source of workplace stress. Stress can emanate from tasks that evoke few of the individual’s overall skills and abilities; that require little responsibility; or that lack variety, challenge and intellectual stimulation‘ (Cherniss 1980b; Cooper & Marshall 197a; Katz & Kahn 1987, cited in Smylie 1999, p. 63). The effects of underutilisation can be exacerbated when tasks that require relatively few skills also impose high demands on the teacher’s time, effort and emotional involvement. Hackman and Oldham (1980, cited in Smylie 1999) promote motivation, appreciation, challenge and the meaningfulness of work as significant factors in the underutilisation theory of a source of workplace stress.

1.5.4 Meta Level Factors Influencing the Stress Condition


Sergiovanni (1999) conceptualises stress as being ‘an artefact of the interplay of dominant and subordinate theories for the school, of human nature, of action, of leadership, and of other aspects of schooling’ (p. 256). He posits that stress is inevitably caused ‘by the fact that the views of teachers are subordinate to those of the elites’, ‘that the views of teachers are also subordinate to the views that are institutionalised in the present regulations of teaching’. To change this equation, he espouses that the views of teachers should be more dominant (Sergiovanni 1999), thereby reducing stress production for teachers.

1.5.5 Meta-Analysis

Like Woods, Sergiovanni (1999) acknowledges the role of the micro, meso and macro levels in the analysis of teachers and stress but encourages inclusion of a meta level analysis for a more adequate understanding of teaching and stress. The meta level is the level of theory. He suggests stress in teachers as an ‘artefact of competing mindscapesthat exist at the meta level’ (1999, p. 256). ‘These competing mindscapes create different epistemological and axiological realities at the micro, meso, macro and meta levels’ (1999, p. 256). Given this, ‘Different realities provide the seedbed for stress for those whose realities are less powerful’ (1999, p. 256). There is a differentiation in the weight that mindscapes carry, and the potential for stress to arise occurs when the mindscapes of teachers fail to align with the more powerful ones held ‘by educational or outside elites and the more powerful ones sanctioned by officially established school arrangements’ (Sergiovanni,1999, p. 256).
Interrelational problems are exacerbated when there is a conflict of mindscapes and teachers receive conflicting behavioural expectations that require them to deal with conflicting role demands. Sergiovanni (1999) argues that ‘mindscapes are translated into educational practice through theories’ (p.275), and ‘competing mindscapes provide us with dominant and subordinate theories for the school, of people, of teaching, of action, and of leadership’. Unfortunately, if dominant pedagogical and ideological theories are not sufficiently aligned with those of teachers, stress in teaching is inevitable (Sergiovanni 1999).

1.6 The Formation of Australia’s Workers’ Compensation Law and its Role in Shaping the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s Claims Process.

This section provides a truncated history of the formation and evolution of the Australian Workers’ Compensation system and, contextualises the development of the Victorian Workers’ Compensation system.

The momentum for the advent of Workers’ Compensation laws in Australia, as in Great Britain, North America and parts of Europe, was a belated response to nineteenth century industrialisation (Purse 2005). The importance of Workers’ Compensation is that it provides a level of financial security to workers and their families, an issue of concern for many participants in this study.

According to Australia’s federalist constitution, Workers’ Compensation law is a state government’s responsibility. Therefore, each Australian state and territory has its own Workers’ Compensation scheme, governed by respective legislation. The state and national schemes vary considerably in design, coverage, benefit entitlements, compliance and premiums.

Prior to 1900, the costs of work related injury were borne largely by workers and their families. Access to compensation for work related injuries was confined to common law remedies. Under common law, an injured worker could claim compensation if negligence could be proven; however, the law was judicially constructed to prevent this.
In the first two decades of the twentieth century, federal and state governments introduced Workers’ Compensation laws throughout Australia. No-fault liability was introduced replacing tort liability, whereby Workers’ Compensation would be paid if employer negligence could be established.

The first Workers’ Compensation laws were introduced around the turn of the twentieth century, initially in South Australia, and then in other Australian jurisdictions. The initial Australian statutes were based on 1897 British legislation. Each state’s scheme has developed in the context of its own political, social and economic environment. The difference between the various schemes has driven diverse reform initiatives aimed at national uniformity, particularly gaining momentum during the 1970s (Hanks 2008).

Throughout the existence of Workers’ Compensation policy, the range of workers covered by legislation, eligibility criteria, quantum of compensation payments available, underwriting arrangements, dispute resolutions mechanisms and the pricing of employer premiums have all undergone major changes.

1.7 Victoria’s Workers’ Compensation Policy

Situating the development of Victoria’s Workers’ Compensation policy within the Australian context (as outlined above) helps provide an understanding of the development of the WorkCover claims process outlined further in this section.

Workers’ Compensation legislation started in Victoria, in 1914, with benefits payable to workers for injuries ‘arising out of and in the course of employment’ (Hanks 2008, p. 13). The Act has been amended 80 times since 1985 (Hanks 2008).

In 1985, the Victorian Cain Labour government introduced far-reaching Workers’ Compensation reforms. The new scheme named Workcare was based on public underwriting. It included access to vocational rehabilitation, workplace health, as well as safety reforms and a new dispute resolution system. In the new scheme, on-going payments were adopted; whereby previously, payments were arbitrarily terminated after a maximum limit had been reached (Purse 2005). On-going payments, up to 80 per cent
of average weekly earnings were available to workers where no suitable substitute employment was available. The right of injured workers to access common law damages was restricted to claims for non-economic loss (Victorian Parliament 1985). Victoria had an ‘open liability’ model of weekly payments, meaning payments to injured workers were determined by the duration of their injuries along with their ability to return to employment.

More restrictions were introduced in 1987 and 1989, whereby the reduction to weekly payments decreased to 60 per cent of average weekly earnings for long-term claimants who had an impairment level of less than 15 per cent (Victorian Accident Compensation Commission 1989). The average premium rate was increased from 2.55 per cent to 3.3 per cent.

In the early 1990s, the liberal Kennett government radically changed the eligibility for compensation, and abolished claims for injuries incurred while travelling to and from employment. Phased guidelines for weekly payments were introduced, reducing the time to claim weekly payments to two years. By 1997, common law rights available to injured workers were abolished (Purse 2005).

On 24 July 1984, following months of complex negotiation and controversy, the casting vote by the Victorian Legislative Council President, Rod MacKenzie, secured the passing of the Labour Government’s Accident Compensation Bill, when a new Workers’ Compensation system named Workcare became law (Considine 1991). This was WorkCover’s predecessor. The name Workcare was changed to WorkCover near the end of 1994.

The *Victorian Accident Compensation Act 1985* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (which includes regulating the Workers’ Compensation system in Victoria), are administered by the Victorian WorkCover Authority, a statutory body under the responsibility of the Victorian Department of Finance. According to the report entitled *Back on the job: Report on the inquiry into aspects of Australian workers’ compensation schemes*, ‘Workers’ compensation schemes should aim to provide
workers with a meaningful and sustainable outcome following a workplace injury’
(2003, Executive Summary). Further, the report states:

The best long term prospects for an injured worker lie in a safe and timely return to work with reasonable compensation for medical costs, work time lost and for non-economic loss in the event of an injury. Early intervention through rehabilitation and retraining as required is the best approach to achieve a return to work appropriate to the capability of the injured worker (Forward 2003).

An intention of the development of the legislation and policy was to ensure the wellness of injured workers with not only physical work related injuries, but psychological ones, such as stress, which is the focus of this research.

The Victorian WorkCover Authority’s role is stated in the report as follows:

Provide just and fair compensation to workers’ for work-related injuries and illnesses.

The Victorian WorkCover Authority also aims to ensure the health and safety of people at work; and, reduce the social and economic costs to the Victorian community of workplace injuries or illnesses (Victorian WorkCover Authority 2005, p. 2).

In 2008, the Victorian Labor state government extended the claimable weekly payment period from two years to two and a half years; it also extended the required time needed to advise a claimant of the decision to terminate a claim to 12 weeks, as compared to 28 days. Following the conclusion of a claim, a claimant has the option of remaining a WorkCover claimant until they are 65, and receiving 75 per cent of their pre-injury average weekly income, or claiming ill-health retirement, which means accessing their superannuation upon meeting specific criteria. The Victorian Labor state government also increased the duration allowable for claiming WorkCover by six months in 2006, and increased the time in which a claimant must be informed of their claim’s termination from three weeks to 13 weeks.
1.8 Victorian WorkCover Authority’s Claims Process Steps

The following section outlines the mandatory legislative steps required by an injured teacher when lodging a WorkCover claim. These steps were followed by all participants in the research. The procedure is indicative of the difficulties some participants had interpreting and following these steps, and the influence it had upon relationships within the claims process.

1.8.1 Claims Lodgement Procedure

In the event of an injury or illness while undertaking teaching duties, a teacher may lodge a WorkCover claim, thereby becoming an active participant in the WorkCover policy process.

1.8.2 The Claims Process

The main actors in the claims process are injured workers, treating practitioners, employers and insurance companies. Their relationships with one another are constituted through particular kinds of practices, configured according to specific institutional imperatives and regulations.

Upon lodgement of a WorkCover claim, a sequential process follows, which is outlined below:

1) The injured teacher informs the school principal of the injury in writing.
2) The injured teacher consults a medical practitioner.
3) The injured teacher obtains a WorkCover claim form, completes it, has it independently witnessed and submits it to the principal.
4) The principal acknowledges the receipt of the WorkCover claim form.
5) The injured teacher awaits correspondence from the Victorian WorkCover Authority or the Department of Education’s insurance agent, advising if the claim has been accepted.
6) The injured teacher receives correspondence from the insurance agent advising them to attend an arranged medical appointment.
7) Depending on the length of the claim, the injured teacher receives correspondence advising them that they have been allocated a rehabilitation group, and that they must work with this group for rehabilitation and/or training.

8) The injured teacher must lodge monthly WorkCover claim forms completed by their treating doctor.

9) Depending on the length of the injured teacher’s claim, they must attend periodic medical consultations with specialists, as chosen and directed by the insurance agent to ensure the validity of their claim.

1.9 Purpose and Aim of the Research

This thesis is an exploratory investigation into the relationship between Victorian state school teacher stress claimants and the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s claims process. The aim of the research is to contribute new theory into this field, as discussed in Chapter 6. A sociological perspective is adopted for this research as this accommodates the complexity of the interrelationships operating within this field. The research examines the experiences of a group of claimants as they interact with a public policy delivered under specific socio-structural conditions. The research question is also relevant to other academic disciplines such as education and industrial relations. In consideration of the dearth of contemporary and comprehensive research into how participants experience the claims process for stress related injuries, there is a current need to contribute to the research to advance the discourse and explicate pertinent practices and issues, as identified by Victorian state school teacher stress claimants. However, we must be mindful that, as stated by Roberts-Yates (2003), “WorkCover claims/injury management and rehabilitation is a learning process for all stakeholders’.

While the aforementioned discussion shows the various domains in which teacher stress can be investigated, micro, macro, meso and meta, there is a lack of research at the micro level and from the standpoint of the injured teachers. To my knowledge, there is no research into the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s claims process as experienced directly by Victorian state school teacher stress claimants. This view is supported by McIntosh (2005) who also claims that there is a dearth of contemporary and comprehensive research in this area. This gap was also identified by McIntosh (2005) in
her Melbourne University PhD thesis on WorkCover and teacher rehabilitation, entitled *Perspectives on Stress Claims: A Comparative Study*. In this thesis, McIntosh proclaimed that no studies to date have explicitly explained stress claim situations from the claimant’s perspective. She declared that "the greatest obstacle" encountered in her research was "access to claimants, bureaucracy and the "middle man"" (p. 133).

In congruence with McIntosh (2005), Parrish and Schofield (2005) observed that "Only modest research has been conducted in Australia on the claims process since the changes to Workers' Compensation over the last decade and a half, with most of this conducted in the 1990s". Referring to New South Wales cases, Parrish and Schofield (2005) state that "Nevertheless, its findings suggest that NSW's WorkCover's criticisms of the claims management process are well justified. Significant limitations have been identified". McIntosh (2005) further stated that "there is still a great deal to learn about how the claims process is organised, how it operates and how it affects injured workers" (p. 13).

Blase (1982) commented that although "The study of teacher morale, satisfaction, and anxiety have long been areas of research and scholarly activity in education, theoretical knowledge on these areas remains limited" (p. 93). He also noted that in recent years, increasing attention had been given to understanding teacher stress and burnout; but suggested that generally research was limited to identifying the sources and consequences of stress for individuals. In 1982, Blase declared that "detailed descriptions and inductive theory derived directly from the study of the subjective perceptions of teachers regarding their work lives is the exception rather than the rule" (p. 95). Blase (1982) further highlighted that this scholarly work has been limited to the identification of sources and consequences of stress for individuals, as addressed by other scholars mentioned earlier in this chapter.

This research aims to include elements pertaining to the above; however, the focus will be on producing new knowledge about how the Victorian WorkCover Authority's stress claims process is experienced by Victorian state teachers. This knowledge will inform recommendations for positive change for claimants within the Victorian WorkCover Authority's stress claims process for participants, current and future teacher stress...
claimants and policy makers. The intent is also to raise critical insight into the WorkCover claims process and highlight areas of priorities for participants. Further purposes are to explore the accountability tension between participants and the bureaucratic demands inherent within the claims process operating within a neo-liberal agenda, and to identify the coping strategies employed by participants.

The thesis provides an overview of the scant literature pertaining to this subject, augments the existing knowledge and adumbrates pertinent practices and issues identified by participants. The intent is to analyse decision-making processes, and expose power relationships entailed within the claims process, to provide insights about the current process that could assist prospective claimants.

1.10 Questions Informing this Research

The research questions are informed by the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, and are framed to address the aims of this research best by representing the experiences of the injured teacher claimants. The key themes of interpretivism, such as interaction, the meanings that things and events have for people, access, dominance, agency and communication, are contained within the research questions; however, they are not restrictive of a fuller exploration of the area under research. The research questions for the duration of the claims process are as follows:

- What relationships were of value to the teachers?
- Were there power imbalances?
- Were norms and sanctions used to regulate claimant conduct throughout the process?
- Was contractual power experienced by claimants?
- Were contested validity claims identified?

And more generally:

- Which aspects of the process need changing?
- Could specific interactions affect access to change for the claimants within the process?
- Was the process effective for the teacher claimants?
1.11 Structure of the Thesis

1.11.1 Chapter 1: Background and Context of this Study

The thesis comprises six chapters. The first chapter sets out the purposes, background and context of the study. An overview of the Australian and Victorian Workers’ Compensation schemes and the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s stress claims process is presented, along with an examination of current theories of occupational stress. The aims and significance of this research are also presented, and the rationale for the research is outlined to demonstrate the academic and practical intentions of the project.

1.11.2 Chapter 2: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter 2 elaborates the differences between the Glaserian and Straussian Grounded Theory methodologies and justifies my choice of the orthodox Glaserian approach. The grounds for my selection of the Glaserian paradigm and the theoretical perspective used in the research are established. The epistemological and ontological assumptions of the research are provided, and an in-depth explication of Grounded Theory methodology is presented.

1.11.3 Chapter 3: Data Collection Methods and Analysis

This chapter elaborates the stages of data collection and transcription; the ethics clearance process, the interviewing process and interviewing techniques; the processes involved with developing the theory; and the selection of the core category and Basic Social Process. The research findings are presented in Chapter 4.
1.11.4 Chapter 4: Continual Resolving: A Tight Rope Act!

This chapter presents the emergent Grounded Theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’ The theoretical model of this research is established using a processual model. It demonstrates how the core category and the Basic Social Process of ‘Continual Resolving’ form a parsimonious Grounded Theory to explain how participants resolve their main concern.

1.11.5 Chapter 5: Literature Comparison and Discussion

This chapter presents a comparative literature, acknowledges the limitations of literature and research into this substantive field and situates this research within it. It also explicates theories of stress in relation to the findings, and the parsimonious theory of Continual Resolving.

1.11.6 Chapter 6: Implications and Conclusion

This concluding chapter reveals how this thesis has reached its aims, and further, how it has satisfied Glaser’s criteria for evaluating Grounded Theory. It presents the limitations of the study and concludes with recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2: Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Introduction to the Research Process

This chapter presents the epistemological and ontological positions that inform the study and subsequent choice of methodology and methods used by the researcher to address the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. This chapter locates Grounded Theory within the context of the theoretical perspectives that inform the study, and provides the justification for the choice of this methodology. The chapter also explicates some specific methods utilised in Grounded Theory.

The study has several limitations that are discussed in more detail in the sampling section in Chapter 3. Nonetheless, this study is able to provide some useful understandings from the claimants' perspectives of the WorkCover stress claims process.

2.2 Choosing a Research Topic and Methodology

2.2.1 Role of the Researcher

The consideration of the role of the researcher has importance in any qualitative research where there is direct involvement in the study of people's experience, and therefore, there is potential to affect that experience and/or interpret it according to the researcher's own biases. This is outlined by Janesick (2000):

The qualitative researcher must describe and explain his or her social, philosophical, and physical location in the study … [and] must honestly probe his or her own biases at the onset of the study, during the study, and at the end of the study by clearly describing and explaining the precise role of the researcher in the study (p. 389).

Grounded Theory researchers take on the role of the neutral observer as closely as possible, allowing themselves to act as a conduit for the data, fragmenting and
reconstituting it. Grounded Theory is a perspective-based methodology (Glaser 2003), where the role of the researcher is to present the lived experience and perspective of the participants, and to report the participants' own view of their reality and the meanings they attach to that reality as closely as possible. The researcher must remain open-minded and not approach the data with a preconceived view or particular agenda.

2.2.2 Selecting a Research Design

Koch's (1995) proposition, that there is importance in establishing congruence between the research methodology and the research question, was a guiding principle behind the selection of a Symbolic Interactionist perspective and use of Grounded Theory methodology for this research.

Further, according to Koch (1995), when undertaking research, it is important to clarify the ontological assumptions that underlie the methods used. Identification of these assumptions, and the decisions about the methods employed to carry out the research contribute to the reader's ability to make sense of the researcher's intentions (Maggs-Rapport 2000).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) propound that preceding the question of research approach (such as quantitative or qualitative research methodologies) is the assessment and the influence of the researchers' paradigm or basic belief system or world view that guides the investigator (p. 105). This is important because different research methods are ultimately tied to different epistemological positions (Bryman 1989).

Identification of such a paradigm is critical because it is concerned with ultimates or first principals and defines for the holder the nature of the world, the individual's place in it … the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p. 107). It is also concerned with the intrinsic value of this knowledge to the researcher (Heron & Reason 1997). These basic beliefs are best described as statements of faith, as there is no way to prove each one. These are philosophical

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debates, grounded in basic assumptions about the world; they are starting points that guide the use of any methodological instrument.

Crotty (1998) uses the term 'scaffolding learning' to encapsulate the function of a research paradigm. Such a paradigm typically accommodates the myriad of complex interrelationships between theory, methodology and Grounded Theory methods. Researchers work within a particular paradigm that contains a set of fundamental beliefs and principles. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), this represents a "worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts" (p. 107). A paradigm embodies ontological understandings of "what is" as well as epistemological assumptions about "what it means to know". These are, for Crotty (1998), inextricably related issues. Each paradigm embraces the researcher's ontological, epistemological and methodological premises; in turn, these influence the questions asked by the researcher and the interpretations they bring to the questions (Denzin & Lincoln 2003).

When selecting the methodology of Grounded Theory, the use of qualitative methods, the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, and the epistemology of constructionism as a research paradigm for this research, the following four questions were adopted from Crotty (1998). The application of these four questions enabled the researcher to clarify each of the basic elements of the research process.

- What methods do we propose to use?
- What methodology governs our choice and use of methods?
- What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology in question?
- What epistemology informs this theoretical perspective?

Crotty (1998) asserts that ontology sits alongside epistemology as influential in the researcher's theoretical perspective, and that each theoretical perspective embodies a certain way of understanding what is (ontology) as well as a certain way of understanding what it means to know (epistemology) (p. 10).
Also posited by Crotty (1998) is that we cannot be both objectivist, that is, take the view that things exist as meaningful entities independently of consciousness and experience, that they have truth and meaning residing in them as objects’ (p. 5) and constructionist or subjectivist. Constructionism purports that ‘Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of our world … Meaning is not discovered, but constructed … different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon … subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning’ (Crotty 1998, p. 8). This implies that meaning or ‘truth’ cannot be described as ‘objective’. This research is premised on the latter. An example of this is the questions used in the interviews (Appendix G), such as ‘How would you describe your claims experience?’ This approach attempted to give new meanings to the same phenomenon as experienced by participants.

Grounded Theory has been selected to inform this research as it presents an inductive model to research (Glaser 2005), and it is a useful paradigm for exploring ‘what is going on in any particular arena’ (p. 145). For Guthrie (cited in Glaser 2005), Grounded Theory provides a global view and ‘a method for solving the puzzle of viewing human experience and of structuring reality’ (p. 145). The particular arena of the WorkCover stress claims process was opened up using Grounded Theory, making the research devoid of preconceptions associated with a deductive approach.

Glaser, who concurs with Klee, (cited in Glaser 2005) defines a research paradigm as being ‘an achievement that defines practice for a community of researchers. It defines practice because the achievement constitutes a model to be limited and further extended’ (p. 146). Based on this, I have consciously entered the research community of Grounded Theory.

2.3 Ontological and Epistemological Selection

This qualitative research is predicated by a non-objectivist ontology and a constructionist epistemology. This section is prefaced with the words of Immanuel Kant (1998, first published 1781), as espoused in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which assist with understanding the ontology and epistemology of this study:
There is no doubt whatever, that all our cognition begins with experience; for how else should the cognitive faculty be awakened into exercise if not through objects that stimulate our senses and in part themselves produce representations, in part bring the activity of our understanding into motion to compare these, to connect or separate them, and thus to work up the raw material of sensible impressions into a cognition of objects that is called experience? As far as time is concerned, then, no cognition in us precedes experience and with experience every cognition begins (p. 136).

Ontology, as defined by Crotty (1998), is “concerned with what is”, with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality” (p. 10). Ontological questions concern the nature of reality: is there an objective reality separate to the individual, or is reality created by our individual and collective consciousness? Epistemological questions are concerned with the nature of the relationship between the knower and the would-be knower and what can be known’ (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p. 108). An ontological and epistemological stance affects the nature of the research undertaken because they entail claims or assumptions about a particular approach to social inquiry about the nature of social reality‘ (Blaikie, cited in Crotty 1998, p. 11).

Both an objectivistic epistemology and the positivistic ontological position were rejected for this research. An objectivistic epistemology suggests that sense is made of the world by means of approaches like hypothetico-deductive method, where hypotheses are formed a priori, then either confirmed or falsified by reality (Guba & Lincoln 1989). Hence, an objectivist epistemology was not apposite for this research, due to its incompatibility with the inductive method appropriate for Grounded Theory methodology.

The positivistic ontological position was considered inappropriate, as it poses unitary epistemological assumptions. Interpretivists reject the belief that reality is unitary, and an interpretivist analysis starts from recognition that there are multiple realities. Further, an interpretivist ontological position eschews the idea that investigation should be based on empirical analytic inquiry, moderated by the objective rules of scientific method.
Popper’s (Brytting, cited in Glaser 1995) assertion that, ‘There is an ordered reality but our knowledge about it is, and will continue to be, incomplete and evolutionary’ (p. 522) was influential in selecting a non-objectivist ontological position and in the employment of Symbolic Interactionism as the theoretical framework. This approach is useful for uncovering knowledge about the ordered reality entailed in the WorkCover claims process and contributing to the incomplete knowledge of claimants’ experiences of this process. Annells’ (1996) stipulation that Grounded Theory arose from the Symbolic Interactionist tradition was also influential in the selection of a non-objectivist ontological position.

2.4 Epistemology: Constructionism

Constructionism is the epistemology informing the theoretical perspective adopted in this research: it is instrumental in informing the theoretical perspective of interpretivism. Epistemology is concerned with the ‘nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general bias’ (Hamlyn in Crotty 1998, p. 8). For Maynard (cited in Crotty 1998), ‘Epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate’ (p. 8); while Somekh and Lewin (1990) see epistemology as referring to philosophical questions relating to the nature of knowledge.

Fundamental to constructionism is the theory that meaning is created by determining a collective understanding of the influence of culture on the phenomena under study. Thus, individuals and society are collectively shaped by culture and the social dimension is central to concept development by a researcher (Crotty 1998). One of my research objectives is to establish a collective understanding of the WorkCover stress claims culture, and the role it plays in influencing participants’ experiences, as well as the decision-making processes of participants. This research aims to provide a better understanding for participants of the culture in which their decisions were made.

Social constructionism was introduced into the social science discipline by Karl Mannheim and by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in 1966, through their book The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Social Construction of Knowledge.
Social construction for Berger and Luckmann (1966) refers to aspects of the evolution of the social system, as emphasised in the title of their ground-breaking book. First, institutions are socially constructed as the outcome of actions of socialised agents and the interrelations between them; and second, knowledge (what reality is taken to be, and how it is perceived) is socially constructed.

Berger and Luckmann saw an institution as reciprocally habitualised interactions that become capable of being passed on to other actors (Berger & Luckmann 1966). This reciprocal typification becomes institutionalised when there is a typology of actors and roles that other actors may enter, which can be transmitted and shared (Berger & Luckmann 1966). The mechanisms for such transmission of institutions are primarily legitimation (the existing institutions’ explanation and legitimisation to a new generation of actors who did not create them) and socialisation (new actors become socialised into norms and procedures held by that institution). As actors become acquainted with the institutions that have been legitimised to them and as they become socialised into the norms, procedures and values of the framework, they are internalised, making shared inter-subjective meanings possible for social interaction in society (Berger & Luckmann 1966).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) believed that _institutional structure emerges as the (intended or unintended) outcome of actions of actors and the interrelations between them; however, this structure attains an _objectivity_ or reality that is independent of those actors_ (p. 74. They describe the nexus between the individual and society as being internalisation and externalisation, _the individual member of society simultaneously externalises his own being into the social world, and internalises it as an objective reality … to be in society is to participate in its dialectic_ (p. 149). They also stated that _Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product_ (pp. 78–79).

The primary concern of Berger and Luckmann is that with the social construction of everyday social reality, with regard to social life in general, and in particular, the social construction of everyday, common-sense norms and understandings. Berger and Luckmann articulate the social construction of societal institutions along with the mental representations in the agent through which social _reality_ can be understood.
The *objective institutional structure* that is created by the actors is typically value-laden and idea-laden, as the institutional structure is constructed with specific typifications in mind. The variety of values may vary within it, or emerge from the interactions that contribute to the creation of institutional structure. This research examines the process of *reality construction* from the participants' perspective.

Implicit to constructionism is the view that meaning is not discovered, but constructed (Crotty 1998); and further, it is _the view that all knowledge, and therefore meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context_ (Crotty 1998, p. 42). _The world we know is a human construction_ (Stake 1995, p. 99), but _people may construct different understandings of the same phenomena in different ways_ (Crotty 1998, p. 9).

Constructionism entails the following idea:

Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of our world … Meaning is not discovered, but constructed … different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon … subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning (Crotty 1998, p. 8).

Constructionism endorses that construction of events will be influenced by the socio-cultural and historical environment; a view espoused by Marx and Engels (1967, first published in 1888), and of relevance to the production of theory in the WorkCover claims process.

Constructionists _desire participants to take an increasingly active role in nominating questions of interest for any inquiry, and in designing outlets for findings to be shared more widely within and outside the community_ (Guba & Lincoln 2000, p. 175). Glaser (1978) shares an aspect of this position, as he recommends that research findings should be available and useful to a wider community, rather than just the academic community. This is also one of my research objectives, as I would like to disseminate the findings of this research as widely as possible, with the objective of affecting some change in the
WorkCover claims policy. Further, for me, research should contain a practical goal and purpose.

There can be confusion in relation to the epistemological positions of constructionism and constructivism. Definitions provided by Crotty (1998) are set out in the table below, to show distinctions between the two, and to provide and introduce the role of the social dimension pertinent to the Work Cover claims process. A possible risk of the constructivist approach is that the theory or emerging constructs may become subjective ideas that are not grounded in the data (Crotty 1998), and can therefore lack reality (Schwandt 2000), which is not congruent with Glaserian Grounded Theory. The following table assists in the understanding of the applicability of Glaserian Grounded Theory to this research. It shows the valuing of the social dimension when creating meaning.
### Table 1: Comparison of Social Constructionism and Constructivism

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<th>Factor</th>
<th>Social Constructionism</th>
<th>Social Constructivism</th>
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<td>How meaning is created</td>
<td>Determining a collective understanding of the influence of culture on the phenomena being studied is the key to constructing a meaningful theory about it (Crotty 1998)</td>
<td>The individual social researcher considers many possibilities when constructing meaning of the phenomena being studied (Crotty 1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>Meaning is constructed within culture. Individuals and society collectively are shaped by constructs to explain culture</td>
<td>The researcher considers many possible constructs to explain the social phenomena being studied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When a researcher is constructing meaning about a phenomenon, the social dimension is central to developing the construct (Crotty 1998)</td>
<td>By considering the multiple possibilities that the data has to offer, each researcher studying the same phenomena is likely to construct a different theory. Each way of making sense of the phenomena is worthy and adds to the richness of ideas that explain what is happening (Crotty 1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weakness</td>
<td>Overly determined with trying to determine the influence of culture on the phenomena, and therefore risks ‘forcing’ data into categories and concepts. The role of the researcher is that of the neutral observer seeking the theory that best explains the social reality and assuming that this is the case</td>
<td>Tendency to become subjectivist, i.e. to put forward your own interpretation that is not grounded in or related to the data being studied. Crotty (1998) criticises much constructivist research as becoming subjectivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application in the research</td>
<td>The researcher studies the phenomenon in the context of the culture that has shaped it and makes this explicit in the theory developed to explain it. When considering this study, the focus would be to gain a collective understanding from the employees about the influence that culture had on their beliefs, attitudes and approach to the WorkCover claims process (Crotty 1998)</td>
<td>The researcher makes explicit that their construct of the phenomena being studied is just one interpretation of many possibilities. In relation to this question, the researcher would acknowledge the reality of her unique relationship with the teacher and participants influence on all stages of the research process. Another researcher is likely to develop a different theory. Both are valid (Charmaz 2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following consideration of these two epistemologies, social constructionism was chosen to guide the research approach, as it best explains the understandings the participants had in negotiating the claims process.

From an ontological standpoint, the aim of Grounded Theory is to develop middle range theories, as expounded by Merton (1957). These aim to explain in a processual manner how social actors deal with the contingencies of daily reality. Both substantial and formal theories are "middle range", falling between the minutia of everyday life and all-encompassing grand theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Middle range theories tend to focus on behavioural phenomena, for example trust or caring, and are essentially constructed around a Basic Social Process, which is usually a core category or central theme that unites conceptual categories. This means it is paradigmatically compatible with the ontological position of interpretivism and the epistemological position of social constructionism.

Stake (1995) identifies that the aim of research is not to discover but to construct a clearer picture of reality which is the intent of this research. In the following section, the methods and methodology employed for this endeavour will be outlined.

### 2.5 Major Theoretical Perspectives

The major theoretical perspectives underpinning research are positivism, post positivism, post modernism, interpretivism (symbolic, phenomenological, hermeneutics) and critical social science (Denzin & Lincoln 1998). These are briefly outlined in the following section to situate the objectives of this research in the theoretical framework.

#### 2.5.1 Positivism

Positivist ontology is based on realism, rather than a relativist understanding of nature. The epistemology of positivism is that knowledge is impersonal and objective with information gained independent of the researcher. Therefore, the methodology is
experimental where a hypothesis may be tested using controlled conditions. Knowledge gained is considered objective, general and not affected by the context in which information has been gathered. This approach is often used in scientific inquiry, where evidence is collected in a structured manner and measured against a predetermined control.

“Positivism asserts that objective accounts of the real world can be given” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 27). As a theoretical perspective, positivism is centred on notions of impartiality and objectivity. It assumes that the researcher can remain apart from the research field, and should not influence it. A positivist perspective apprehends the social world as existing independent of human consciousness, where the data are not affected by the participants’ or the researcher’s interpretation. It aims for internal and external validity with the results presented in the form of a scientific report (Denzin & Lincoln 2000).

2.5.2 Post Positivism

Post positivism is a modified version of positivism. Ontologically it is based on a concept of realism; however, it is acknowledged that humans do not have the capacity, due to imperfect sensory and intellectual mechanisms, to determine the ultimate truth (Guba). Post positivism allows that “only partially objective accounts of the world can be produced, for all methods for examining such accounts are flawed” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p. 27).

2.5.3 The Crisis of Representation Period

The crisis of representation period (1986–1990) appeared in writings that “called into question the issues of gender, class and race” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 16). Researchers had difficulty with “how to locate themselves and their subjects in reflexive texts” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 3). Older models of meaning embedded in positivism and absolute concepts of truth were challenged. As a result, some researchers moved away from a model of gathering data as being quite separate from the researcher to one that included the researcher in the research experience, thereby questioning issues such
as validity, reliability and objectivity. These changes in thinking about how knowledge is created, understood and used, and the role of the researcher, led to the more recent research periods of post-modern, post-experimental, methodologically contested present and fractured future, and the framework of post-structuralism.

A post-modern approach rejects a meta-narrative generalised theory. Such theory is understood as illusory and impositional; it denies differences and indeterminacy in the pursuit of social control (Connole 1993). Post modernists regard knowledge as ‘local, partial, discontinuous and constantly in process’ (Harvey cited in Connole 1993, p. 14). Post modernists have moved away from older models of meaning and truth, which viewed gathering data as something separate from the researcher. Post modernists include the researcher in the research experience. This shift in the role of the researcher leads to questioning issues such as validity, reliability and objectivity.

2.5.4 Critical Theory

The object of critical social science inquiry is to ‘understand the complexity of domination itself (which cannot be reduced to overt oppression), as well as the methodological problems involved in studying it’ (Harvey 1990, cited in Morrow & Brown 1994) (parenthesis in original). The intent of the research, according to Popkewitz (1984, cited in Goodman) ‘is not just to describe and interpret the dynamics of society, but to consider the ways in which the processes of social formation can be modified’ (p. 50). This has been a guiding principle for this research.

The development of Critical Theory is attributed to the Frankfurt School3 also known as The Institute of Social Research, which was affiliated with The University of Frankfurt. It was the second social science institute in Germany, and has been useful in providing another level of analysis for this project.

Embodied within Critical Theory is the belief that people have a great amount of unrealised potential; that people are ‘creative, changeable, and adaptive’ (Neuman 2000, p. 69). However, people can be ‘misled, mistreated, and exploited and they become

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3Also known as the Frankfurt Institute (see Habermas 1984, p. 69).
entangled in a web of social meanings, obligations, and relationships’ (Neuman 2000, p. 69). They fail to identify how change can be possible, and thus lose their independence, freedom, and control over their lives‘ (Neuman 2000).

The Institute theorists were opposed to elements of the Enlightenment, especially the unity of the sciences and the notion of value-free forms of knowledge. Another aspect of the Institute's rejection was of foundational truth, a body of assumptions of positivist teachers. It was similarly rejected in this research in favour of an approach guided by the sociology of knowledge, and a social constructionist approach. Opposition to positivism is central to Critical Theory. The original members of the Institute were acutely aware of the increasing hegemony of positivism and felt compelled to develop their position in the on-going debate with 'instrumental thought', and to support it with a critique of the positivist theory of society (McCarthy 1984).

2.5.5 Interpretivism

The interpretivist perspective has its historical roots in the tradition of hermeneutics, the interpretation of texts. Hermeneutics began with the interpretation of biblical texts; by the twentieth century, its methodology began to be applied to the analysis of human action, particularly in German sociology, including the work of Max Weber (Connole 1993). Weber suggested that 'in the human sciences we are concerned with Verstehen [understanding]' (Crotty 1998, p. 66), in contrast with the explicative approach, Erkennen' (Crotty 1998, p. 67), which is focused on causality. Weber (1968) cited in Freund,) expounded the belief that 'all interpretation, as does science generally, strives for clarity and verifiable proof' (p. 56) which is a guiding principle for this research.

The task of the interpretivist researcher is that of understanding what is going on, or the definition of the situation for the actors, at least in the first instance (Connole 1993). This paradigm informs this research from the social actor's perspective, because it places primary emphasis on the process of understanding, from which the researcher can identify emergent meaning, and then generalise (Connole 1993).
Interpretivism also arose as a reaction to positivism. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) have summarised this as an alternative view of science, and the intent to provide causal explanations (positivism) through developing understanding of human action (interpretivism). They state that from an interpretivist perspective, 'what distinguishes human (social) action from the movement of physical objects is that the former is inherently meaningful' (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 191).

Interpretivists take the view that objectivity can be achieved, and believe that 'it is possible to understand the subjective meaning of action … the interpreter reproduces or reconstructs … the original meaning of the action' (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 193). To achieve this level of objectivity, interpretivists must employ the use of methods that enable them to move outside their own frames of reference, and take a theoretical attitude as a neutral observer. This paradigm is based on the assumption of reality as created by people assigning meaning; where patterns of behaviour 'emerge' due to social conventions. Interpretive research aims to explain and understand social life using an inductive approach, and through representing reality symbolically. This research has attempted to do this. Understanding subjective meaning has importance and 'value neutrality is neither necessary or possible' (Sarantakos 1998, p. 38).

The interpretivist stance requires the employment of qualitative research methods to enable researchers to explore how people make sense of their lives (Miles & Huberman 1994), their experiences and responses to those experiences. These research methods allow for in-depth exploration of the issues as perceived by the participants, to obtain their view of events and hear their story. An interpretivist approach involves the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds [original italics'] (Neuman 2000, p.71).

Interpretivism is relativistic and assumes a local and specifically constructed ontology for the social actor. Interpretivism was a reaction against technical rationality and the global picture that was projected by this view of science. Epistemologically, interpretivists are opposed to the objectivism of the positivist paradigm. The
methodology is hermeneutic, and dialectical, meaning that individual constructions are interpreted with as much accuracy as possible. They are then compared and contrasted with others to develop one or more constructions based on consensus.

The interpretivist paradigm chosen for this research is theoretically embedded in Mead and Blumer’s (1973) ontological commitments to the ‘social construction of reality’. The interpretivist paradigm centred on these principles allowed for an exploratory investigation into the experiences of state school teachers and the WorkCover claims process, and for the Basic Social Process to be identified concurrent with Glaserian Grounded Theory methodology. In avoidance of prescriptive ontological assumptions, general questions about what is occurring in a substantive area are used, rather than rigidly framed preconceived hypotheses, which is also concurrent with a Glaserian approach. This limits the dangers of ‘forcing’ the data, which according to Glaser is a key disadvantage of research designs informed by positivist and critical assumptions.

2.5.6 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism was developed as a distinctive theory in the 1920s and 1930s. The term symbolic interaction refers to the following definition:

The peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings. The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or ‘define’ each other’s actions instead of merely reacting to each other’s actions” (Blumer 1969, pp. 78–79).

Symbolic Interactionism was suggested by George Herbert Mead to explain the key differences between humans and other animals. Mead (1934) and Blumer (1962; 1969) expanded the theory to be centred upon principles of meaning, thought and language. Blumer (1969) further states that ‘Symbolic Interactionism has come into use as a label for a relatively distinctive approach to a study of human life and human conduct’ (p.1).

Symbolic Interactionism is built on three main premises: that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them … that the meaning for such things is derived from, or arises out of the social interaction that one has with one’s
fellows … that these meanings are handled in, and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters‘ (Blumer 1969, p. 2). This study was informed by these premises, combined with Ritzer’s additional basic principles: human beings are endowed with the capacity for thought; meanings and symbols allow people to carry on distinctly human action; and the intertwined patterns of action and interaction make up groups and societies (1996).

The view of Symbolic Interactionism as the _exploratory study of human group life_ (Blumer 1969, p. 40) and as the _way by which a research scholar can form a close and comprehensive acquaintance with a sphere of social life_ held more resonance for me the further my research progressed. In accordance with Blumer (1969), Symbolic Interactionism has been used in this research as a _means to developing and sharpening_ inquiry so that a problem, directions of _inquiry, data, analytical relations, and interpretations arise out of, and remain grounded in the empirical life under study_ (p. 40). Blumer (1967) suggests that _the purpose of exploratory investigation is to move toward a clearer understanding of how one’s problem is to be posed, to learn what are the appropriate data, to develop ideas of what are significant lines of relation, and to evolve one’s conceptual tools in the light of what one is learning about the area of life_ (p.40). This view has been instructional to my research endeavours.

Symbolic Interactionism is located within the theoretical perspective of interpretivism; it is a _down-to-earth approach to the scientific study of human group life and human conduct_ (Blumer 1969, p. 47), and is the theoretical perspective employed to inform this research. Symbolic Interactionism has been instrumental in identifying how _respective lines of behaviour have been built up in the light of the lines of action of the others with whom they are interacting_ (Blumer 1969, p. 52) in the claims process. It has been pertinent to identifying _the need of adjusting to the lines of action of others_ (Blumer 1969, p. 32) by the claimants to procure a claims outcome and of identifying how the formation of activities _is made in the light of the activity of one another_ (p. 54). Blumer and Morrione’s (2004) statement that _The act of an individual refers to the act of another to which it has to adjust_ has further pertinence for gaining an understanding of the claimants decision-making behaviour (p.166).
The two main features of symbolic interaction are that humans learn their own symbols, and that while everyone’s symbols are different, they have only slight differences. Eventually this leads to people having different cultural structure within society, based on their meaning-making structures and mechanisms. A symbol is defined as a stimulus that has learned meaning and value for people, and the response to the symbol is in terms of its meaning and value, rather than in terms of its physical stimulation of the sense organs (Charon 1993). Mead (1934) further states that “Symbolization constitutes objects not constituted before, objects which would not exist except for the context of social relationships wherein symbolization occurs’ (p. 78).

Language negotiates meanings through symbols, and this has allowed human actors to extend their knowledge when engaged in speech acts with others. Further, “language does not simply symbolize a situation or object which is already there in advance; it makes possible the existence or the appearance of that situation or object, for it is a part of the mechanism whereby that situation is created‘ (Mead 1937, p. 78). Symbolic Interactionism provides a sound theoretical rationale for focusing this research on the knowledge and experience of teachers navigating the WorkCover stress claims process.

For Blumer (1962), once human beings identified meaning, discussions developed within a societal structure that became a cultural identifier for differentiating groups. He scrutinises the empirical world of human beings, focusing on the way they act, both as individuals and collectively; then, he presents an interpretation of the complex process of social situations and the community of change.

For symbolic interactionists, meanings are understood as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact (Blumer 1969). This represents a divergence from behaviourist models, based on objectivist epistemologies—an epistemology rejected for this study. People are seen to act reflectively, making conscious constructions to modifying or altering the meanings and symbols they use in their interactions. Based on these patterns of action and interaction in groups and societies, the role of interactionists is to study how people produce their situated versions of society’ (Denzin 1992, p. 23). The generation of meaning and its interpretation is the focus. For Mead (1934), “the processes of experience which the
human brain makes possible are made possible only for a group of interacting individuals; only for individual organisms which are members of a society; not for the individual organism in isolation from other individual organisms' (p. 133).

The concept of perspective has centrality in Symbolic Interactionism. For symbolic interactionists, perspectives are the conceptual frameworks held by individuals that shape their interactions. Perspectives are a guide to stimuli, and can be distinguished from actions, which are a response to stimuli. Perspectives are filter-like, sensitising individuals to parts of individual realities, desensitising them to others and helping individuals make sense of the physical reality to which there is sensitisation (Charon 1992). A goal of this research was to sensitise each individual participant to the claims process in its entirety to gain a fuller, more robust perspective of the claims process.

For Berg (2001), human behaviour can be classified as a response to events and situations, with the researcher having to either _enter into the defining process or develop a sufficient appreciation for the process so that understanding can become clear_ (p.9). Symbolic Interactionism’s _most important methodological premise is that all social inquiry must be grounded in the particular empirical world studied_ (Locke 2001, p. 24). From the detailed description garnered by observing behaviour, researchers can engage in formulating interpretations.

For Charon (1992), Symbolic Interactionism is _the study of human beings interacting symbolically with one another and with themselves and in the process of that interaction making decisions and directing their streams of action_ (p. 147). The utilisation of Symbolic Interactionism in this research has been advantageous for uncovering the decision-making process entailed for participants in the WorkCover claims process, and for identifying the streams of action that arose from it.

Symbolic Interactionism for Crotty (1998), deals with issues such as language, communication, interrelationships and community. These are all central to this research, which is directed to elucidating how participants resolve their main concerns as represented in the discovery of an emergent parsimonious Grounded Theory.
2.6 The Development of Grounded Theory Methodology

According to Glaser (1998), Grounded Theory _was discovered, not invented_ (p. 1). Grounded Theory is a qualitative methodology developed by sociologists Glaser and Anselm Strauss, connected to the universities of Columbia and Chicago.

Glaser and Strauss first detailed the Grounded Theory methodology in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). They were concerned that too much focus on the verification of theory prevented researchers from generating theory. Their seminal works, *Awareness of Dying* (1965) and *Time for Dying* (1968) demonstrated the use of Grounded Theory methodology as a rigorous method for generating a theory from research data.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) acknowledge that Strauss’s thinking was strongly influence by scholars such as Park (cited in Turner 1967), Thomas (1966), Dewey (1922), Mead (1934), Hughes (1971), and Blumer (1969). Strauss's background contributed to his part in the development of Grounded Theory through the inclusion of eight criteria. The first three of these eight criteria are (1) There was the need to go out into the field to discover what is really going on; (2) the belief that persons are actors who take an active role in responding to problematic situations; and, (3) that there was an awareness of the interrelationships among conditions (structure), action (process), and consequences’ (Strauss & Corbin 1998, pp. 10–11).

Glaser came from a different sociological tradition and his thinking was influenced by Paul Lazarseld. Both the Columbia and Chicago traditions were aimed at the production of research that could be useful to professionals and lay audiences (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

Originally, Grounded Theory evolved through a rigorous understanding of quantitative research methods (Lowe & Glaser, cited in Glaser 1995). Prior to its discovery, the prevailing view held by the academic community regarding qualitative research was that it was _only as helpful preliminary to the real methodologies of quantitative research_’ (Lowe & Glaser, cited in Glaser 1995, pp. 675).
Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed Grounded Theory methods in part as a reaction to their perceptions that sociological research at the time suffered from enormous gaps between theory and research, with many researchers concentrating solely on verification of existing ‘grand theory’. Its development also signified a polemic against the positive and deductive conventions dominating conventional American sociology in the years after World War II. Grounded Theory has its origins in Symbolic Interactionism; therefore, the use of Symbolic Interactionism as a compatible theoretical perspective for this research is validated. Symbolic Interactionism developed from a need to link philosophy and orthodox social science, which was viewed as having lost relevance with the everyday life experiences of people (Locke 2001). An outcome of the development of Symbolic Interactionism was to move the social researcher out of the laboratory and into the field, a move that has facilitated the conduct of my research.

Glaser and Strauss were interested in utilising the rigour of quantitative verification methods to develop methods suitable for the discovery of theory, but their focus was on a process of both generation and verification of theory, rather than purely the verification of existing theory. They were concerned that verification was given priority in sociological research, to the detriment of ‘discovering what concepts and hypotheses are relevant for the area that one wishes to research’ (1967, p. 2). In keeping with these points, my research is addressing a gap in the extant literature; and by being exploratory, it is aimed at generating a parsimonious Grounded Theory.

2.7 Grounded Theory Methodology

Grounded Theory was developed as a means of generating theory that is grounded in data and ‘provides … relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and applications’ (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p1). While verification through accurate evidence is important, it should not ‘curb generation’ (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p. 28). Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that it is not necessary to know everything or have ‘perfect descriptions’ in order to ‘develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behaviour’ (p. 30).
Since Glaser and Strauss’s original work, Glaser and Strauss have proposed different ways of undertaking Grounded Theory research. Glaser’s approach to Grounded Theory is referred to as Orthodox Grounded Theory (Alvesson & Skoldberg 2002). Glaser purports that the structures imposed by Strauss and Corbin will lead to forced outcomes based on verification (Babchuk 1996). Glaser proclaimed that Strauss’s work produces a forced, preconceived, full conceptual description, which is fine, but it is not Grounded Theory’ (Glaser 1992, p. 3).

For Babchuk (1996), Glaser’s Grounded Theory methodology embraces generation of theory more effectively than Strauss and Corbin’s methodology, which embraces the validation of theory. He sees the role of the researcher in Glaser’s methodology as independent, whereas with Strauss and Corbin, the researcher is seen as dialectic and active, which could be argued as having commonalities with the role of the critical theorist as researcher.

2.8 Straussian Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss; however, partly due to their diverging views, each developed a different perspective. Following their original publications, each author continued to publish and debate their burgeoning differences in their respective books (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990, 1998; Glaser 1978, 1992, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2005). Fundamentally, there has been a misappropriation of the epistemological foundations of Grounded Theory. This misappropriation is at the centre of the debate, which is characterised by Glaser as the ‘erosion’ of the methodology, contrasted with Strauss's position of ‘evolution’ of the methodology.

Strauss also teamed up with Juliet Corbin, and together they devised more technical ways of coding data than entailed in Glaser’s method of constant comparison of data. Strauss purports that Grounded Theory enables the researcher to discover other people’s ‘realities’, recognising that they are constructed realities, by focusing on the need for grasping the actor’s viewpoints for understanding interaction, process and social change. Annells (1996) purports that Strauss identifies the researcher as an active part of the research process, which shifts Straussian Grounded Theory away from Symbolic
Interactionism, towards a relativist view, where ‘reality consists of local and specific constructed realities’ (p. 386).

Both Glaser and Strauss, according to Charmaz (2000), endorse a realist ontology in assuming ‘an external reality that researchers can discover and record. Glaser achieves this through discovering data, coding it, and using comparative methods step by step; Strauss and Corbin through their analytic questions, hypotheses, and methodological applications‘ (p. 513). Strauss contests Glaser’s notion of the ‘non-knowing researcher’, who only allows the emergent data to shape theorising, suggesting that the researcher should adopt a more provocative, interventionist and interrogationist style in an attempt to influence the data.

According to Locke (1996), this different representation of the role of the researcher by Glaser and Strauss has arisen due to the ‘substantively different renditions of researchers’ relationships to the worlds they study‘ (p. 241). Strauss has developed techniques that encourage researchers to use their own personal and professional experience and accumulated knowledge, and to use it positively, to advance the Grounded Theory process. He believes this enhances theoretical sensitivity, rather than being obfuscatory: ‘if you know an area, have some experience … you don’t tear it out of your head, you can use it‘ (Strauss 1987, p. 84).

Glaser and Strauss have also diverged in some of the methods they utilise in the conduct of Grounded Theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) set down procedures for coding and categories that establish the properties and dimensions of each category. They recommend axial coding, which reconstitutes data after open coding by ‘specifying a category (phenomenon) in terms of the conditions that give rise to it; the context (its specific set of properties) in which it is embedded; the action/interactional strategies by which it is handled, managed and carried out; and the consequences of those categories‘ (p. 97). Therefore, if the phenomenon is ‘pain’, the causal condition could be a broken leg; the properties might include the number of fractures, and the dimensions will include the intensity and the duration of pain.
Strauss and Corbin (1990) declare, "A Grounded Theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomena it represents" (p. 23). This is expressed in their example of the phenomenon as 'pain', which focuses their discussion on the management of pain. In contrast, Glaser's focus is not on the phenomenon itself, but on the pattern of behaviour that resolves the main concerns of the participants. This approach leads to a very different outcome where the core category is emergent, and the Grounded Theory analysis is conceptual. With Strauss and Corbin's method, the phenomenon appears to be pre-ordained and the Grounded Theory analysis primarily descriptive.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) espouse a model that establishes a set of relationships between the causal conditions, phenomena, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies and the consequences. Glaser's (1992) argument is that such a model forces the data, suggesting that while these conditions and dimensions are always existent in the data, they may not always have relevance to the emerging Grounded Theory. Further, Glaser declares that the predetermined focus on these aspects allows the researcher's bias and interests to shape the outcome.

Grounded Theory, as an inductive, non-linear, iterative research methodology, relies on specific processes to ensure development of a theory, rather than a rich description (Glaser 2001). It is a theory about a conceptually latent pattern or patterns (Glaser 2003). It depends on piecing together data, making the invisible visible, identifying the significant from the insignificant, grouping ostensibly unrelated facts logically, placing categories with one another, and attributing consequences to antecedents (Glaser 2003). Grounded Theory is applied to a substantive area to explain the preponderance of behaviour in that area (Glaser 2001). Glaser's Grounded Theory methodology is suitable for the current study as the aim is to generate a theory to explain how Victorian state teachers experience the WorkCover stress claims process.

Glaser (1978) recognises that initial interest in a substantive area may arise from the researcher's own experience of that area, which is the case in this research, given my personal experience with making a WorkCover stress claim. He stresses the importance of remaining open to the emergent data, and not imposing one's own preconceived
ideas or biases on the data (1978). He argues that if the method of constant comparison is followed, then the emerging patterns will ensure that the researcher’s own personal experience will not influence the developing theory. However, he recognises that prior experience could sensitise the researcher to issues within the data, such as the difficulty of communication with actors coordinating the process. Thus, the researcher works with the data to discover the meanings and interpretations that participants give to their experiences (Glaser 1978).

A consideration in choosing Grounded Theory methodology to inform this research was that, according to one of its founders, it has ‘grab’ (Glaser 1978, p. 4); that is, it is an enthralling, highly recognisable and attention grabbing methodology, and ‘because grounded theories are interesting’ (Glaser 1978, p. 4). In addition, such theories are remembered, and researchers use them (Glaser 1978) as a guide for further research. Another reason for the selection of this methodology was due to the enthusiasm, encouragement and openness by one of its originators, Glaser (1998), towards those contemplating employing its use. His enthusiasm is encapsulated in his dictum ‘just do it!’ (Glaser 1998, p. 19) and ‘Do it because it WORKS’ (Glaser 1998, p. 19). Glaser’s passion for his methodology is highly motivating, and his approach appeared very useful for the identification of a problem. Grounded Theory processes were deemed applicable to resolving the identified problem in the context of workplace stress claims from the perspective of the claimants.

The Grounded Theory end product is a set of integrated conceptual hypotheses, centred on a core category, systematically generated from systematic research methodology (Glaser 2003); it does not produce ‘findings or facts’ (Glaser 2001, p. 160).

Glaser’s writing style is conceptually referred to as the art of ‘making theoretical statements about the relationships between concepts; not writing descriptive statements about people’ (Glaser 1978, p. 164). Conceptual writing is achieved by relating ‘concept to concept instead of concept to people’ (Glaser 1998, p. 197). Grounded Theory does not involve a ‘full conceptual description’ of a substantive area (Glaser 2001, p. 199), nor is voluminous description necessary. Grounded Theory is not concerned with accurate description; thus, there is no requirement to provide data that acts as ‘evidence’
or _proof_ of the theory (Glaser 2003). The theory's power resides in concepts, not in
description (Glaser 1978). Describing what is occurring does not conceptually explain
what is occurring as a fundamental pattern of process, typology, cutting point or binary
(Glaser 2003).

There is a requirement for the researcher to weave _illustrations_ into the Grounded
Theory write-ups. Depending on the audience, these illustration can be sparse or
plentiful; the _dosage mix for Grounded Theory is to minimise illustrations, using them
for support purposes_ (Glaser 1978, p. 134). For Glaser (2003), illustrations _do not
prove_, they merely _illustrate here and there_ (p.135) with the specific intention of
assisting the reader's comprehension and making sense of the Grounded Theory.
Illustrations provide a sense of what data were analysed, enliven the theory, create
vision and imagery, and entice the reader by the theory reinforced with the conceptual
grab (Glaser 2003).

The Grounded Theory _package_ consists of the _five S’s_ (Glaser 1998). Doing
Grounded Theory is subsequent, sequential, simultaneous, serendipitous, scheduled and
not undertaken in any predetermined order (Glaser 1998). However, despite this,
Grounded Theory provides rules for every stage; it leaves nothing to chance (Glaser
1998). Its rigour and systematisation, while devoid of being an enforcing methodology,
has been designed to ensure the researcher’s autonomy (Glaser 1998) throughout the
research process.

Charmaz (2000) argues the strengths of a Grounded Theory approach to data analysis,
lie in the following:

(a) Strategies that guide the researcher step by step through an analytic process
(b) The self-correcting nature of the data collection process
(c) The inherent bent of the method towards theory and the simultaneous turning
   away from a contextual description
(d) The emphasis on comparative methods (p. 522).

Grounded Theory methodology has a strong productive emphasis; it assumes to make
the research enterprise worthwhile, given that the analyst will produce a piece for others
in the world; whether by talk, paper or monograph, and therefore, encourage a future
contribution to a field (Glaser 1978). For Glaser (1978), "Some public airing of the
theory (usually publication) is a must", so as not to commit theory to the privatizing
and precious use of a clique‘ (p. 7), such as purely in the Academy. I concur with this
position. The findings of my research will be made available to those who wish to read
it, and in congruence with Glaser’s position (1978), the results will be offered to the
public.

Grounded Theory is imbued with usefulness; it is empowering and allowing of
creativity (Glaser 1978). In Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis (1992), Glaser
comments:

Since so much of originality or creativity is not new ideas—since most ideas
are already known in some way—but new connections between conceptual
ideas; this puts a premium on the discovery and adept use of theoretical codes,
which are the connectors (p. 29).

He elucidates this further by quoting Hans Selye:

It is not to see something first, but to establish solid connections between the
previous known and the hitherto unknown, that constitutes the essence of

Glaser’s goal in developing Grounded Theory was to empower researchers with an
open, generative, emergent methodology (1998, p. 94). Grounded Theory also
contributes its share to the many ways of doing sociology and allows for the deepifying
one’s understanding of social life‘ (Glaser 1998, p. 21). In the introduction to Examples
of Grounded Theory: A Reader (1993), Glaser reinforced the usefulness of Grounded
Theory by stating that Grounded Theory produces core variable theory and the
continuing resolution of problems by identifying Basic Social Processes and basic social
structures that have relevance, fit and which work indefinitely—they have enduring
longevity‘ (p. 1). The uncovering of the basic social and structural processes of a
situation is undertaken at the symbolic and interactional4 levels (Wuest, cited in Glaser
1995). Grounded Theory shows connections between micro level events and larger

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social forces for the purpose of theory reconstruction and informing social action (Neuman 2000). It also places a specific situation, such as the WorkCover claims process, in a macro level historical context (Neuman 2000). Chapter 1 contains an explanation of the micro and macro levels.

This study positions the Victorian WorkCover Authority Workers’ Compensation system in relation to the historical development of an Australian Workers’ Compensation system and in the current social setting. To some degree it locates the world of events within a wider historical, political and social setting and asks: what are the wider social relations and frameworks that give rise to particular practices and events’ (Cox, cited in Robertson 2000, p. 8). This can be defined as a historical structure or settlement, and is suggestive of Gramsci’s (1971) statement defining a particular period as a historic bloc: “a unity between nature and spirit (structure and superstructure), a unity of opposites and of distinctives” (p. 137). A socio-historical analysis is supported by Foucault (1972) and Nias and Groundwater-Smith (1988), who posit that the historical lens is vital to an understanding of contemporary burgeoning rationalisation in all social endeavour (p. 94).

The criterion that establishes Grounded Theory as a creative product is its distinctiveness; “It represents a distinctive knowing” that comes from intense immersion in a sphere of life” (Bartell, cited in Glaser 1995, p. 129).

For something to be considered creative, it must have applicability, and must be relevant in terms of some desired outcome (Bartell, cited in Glaser 1995) a criteria that Grounded Theory meets. Grounded Theory is capable of provoking emotions, which is another identifying characteristic of a creative product, one that has applicability to my research, and more generally, research into Workers’ Compensation systems (Bartell, cited in Glaser 1995). Jackson and Merrisk named this the aesthetic response (Bartell, cited in Glaser 1995, p. 130).

In Theoretical Sensitivity (1978), Glaser declared, “The goal of Grounded Theory is to generate a conceptual theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved, furthermore the goal is not voluminous description,

nor clever verification’ (p. 93). Chapter 3 illustrates the development of the generation of the theory for this thesis.

Grounded Theory relies on an emergent rather than a preconceived framework, so while the methods and steps to be followed are clearly in place, the actual work with the data cannot have advanced planning. Fundamental to Grounded Theory is remaining open to emergent data, rather than imposing one’s own perceptions and expectations on it. This is acknowledged by Glaser (1998), who declares:

   It is a fantasy for the researcher to think he/she is not a part of the data. The idea is to use the motivation that comes from being part of the data while at the same time, keeping track of how one is part of it … [the] job is to find out what is going on by looking at the patterns that emerge from many people … [the researcher’s] own particular problem embedded in an interest gets transcended to a Grounded Theory, which can then be brought back to help him understand the area of interest and his particular problem (p. 49).

In order to achieve this level of objectivity, researchers need to maintain awareness of themselves within the research process. They should be constantly aware of their own thoughts, reactions and feelings when working with the data, combined with an awareness of their own underlying values, assumptions and expectations. Maintaining honesty and being direct with themselves allows the researcher to see where biases emerge. These can then be _bracketed_ from the data to ensure the theory being developed is relevant to participants. The use of memos, reflection, reading and discussions with supervisors and others have enabled me to clarify my experiences, values, attitudes and biases that could influence this work.

According to Glaser and Strauss (1995), the interrelated purposes of theory are as follows:

1) to enable prediction and explanation of behaviour
2) to be useful in theoretical advance in sociology
3) to enable practical application-prediction and explanation
4) to provide a perspective on behaviour
5) to guide and provide a style for research on particular areas of behaviour (p. 524).

More specifically, for Glaser, Grounded Theory is an inductive method of generating theory through the simultaneous collection, coding and analysis of data. J.S. Mill (cited in Becker, in Glaser 1995) argues that ‘collation of facts is an essential part of induction’ (p. 153). Grounded Theory also positions itself outside the traditional positivist hypothetico-deductive approach to research in its emphasis on induction and the emergent processes of the focus on naturalistic settings and discovering the meaning that exists for participants being studied.

Grounded Theory method has ‘clear, extensive procedures’ (Glaser 2003, p. 5), which are adumbrated in the following chapter. It is also a requirement of Grounded Theory that these ‘rigorous procedures are followed in order to generate a theory that fits, works, is relevant, and readily modifiable’ (Glaser 2003, p. 14). Glaser is most adamant that Grounded Theory comes as a ‘set of fundamental processes that need to be followed if the study is to be recognised as a product of the Grounded Theory methodology’ (2001, p. 225). These procedures are as follows: coding (open, selective and theoretical), constant comparison, theoretical sampling, memoing, category building, property development, densification, core category identification, delimitation, saturation, sorting and writing-up.

2.9 Qualitative Research

This study has used qualitative research methods, as they are concerned with process. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) claim that qualitative researchers are concerned more with process rather than with outcomes and products, such as social phenomena or events. Qualitative research has strength for understanding the processes and perceptions involved in a specific empirical context. The selection of the use of qualitative research was influenced by Firestone (1993), who asserts:

Qualitative research is best for understanding the processes that go on in a situation and the beliefs and perceptions of those in it … Qualitative methods
Qualitative research methods can be inclusive of multiple sources of data and are expressive of people’s understanding of themselves. They are more conducive to gathering and representing human phenomena in words; for example, open-ended questions (Green, Kreider & Mayer, cited in Somekh & Lewin 2005) and they have the capacity to identify salient patterns within the Victorian WorkCover claims process. As such, qualitative research methods will allow this research to emphasise ‘episodes of nuance, the sequentiality of happenings in context, the whole of the individual’ (Stake 1995, p. xii).

Further relevant factors in the selection of a qualitative approach are first, given that there is minimal research exploring the experience of Victorian state school teachers and the WorkCover claims process, a qualitative approach such as Grounded Theory is particularly appropriate to assisting the legitimate research objective being achieved. Second, qualitative research methods are appropriate when you want to clarify complex situations, accumulate knowledge about participants’ experience, engage in the construction of a theoretical framework or to gain deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Morse & Richards 2002). Strauss and Corbin (1990) support this argument, as illustrated in this quotation:

Qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomena about which little is known … Also, qualitative methods can be given the intricate details of phenomena (p. 19).

My interest in this research is in exploring the experience of Victorian state school teachers within the WorkCover claims process. This cannot be obtained through classical quantitative methods of surveys and/or statistical analyses or other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin 1998) due to the restrictiveness and narrowness of methods that rely on highly structured interview questions (Lewin, in Somekh & Lewin 2005). Quantitative methods are also more rigid and have a highly structured format, in contrast to qualitative methods, which are ‘more fluid, evolving, and dynamic’ (Strauss & Corbin 2008, p. 13). Quantitative data analysis, which is numerically measured, arose
from probability theory (Lewin, cited in Somekh & Lewin 2005), and is therefore not an appropriate sampling method for this study. Further, 'Quantitative data sets tend to view individuals as averages, or as exhibiting ideal type behaviour, and cannot always be contextualised' (Lauder, in Somekh & Lewin 2005 p. 100) This view is also considered inappropriate for this research.

2.10 The Location of Grounded Theory

The previous discussion of the history of qualitative research and differing theoretical paradigms demonstrates how different perspectives inform research methodologies, and how qualitative methods vary depending on their theoretical framework. The following section explores the debate about the location of Grounded Theory within historical phases and research paradigms.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) believe that any definition of qualitative research must take historical moments into account, because qualitative research takes a different meaning in each of these moments. They pose at least eight historical moments 'that overlap and simultaneously operate in the present' (p. 3). While these moments are 'somewhat artificial' (Denzin & Lincoln 2003, p. 2), they provide a way of locating and understanding the different research paradigms. These moments entail different epistemological assumptions, and qualitative research has different meanings in each moment (Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative studies as those that put the emphasis 'on the qualities of entities; and, on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency' (p. 8). They also offer a generic definition of qualitative research:

A situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).
They also, according to Merriman (1990) and Yin (1994), seek answers to explain ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions.

For Strauss and Corbin (1998) qualitative research can refer to research about people’s lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as about organisational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interaction between nations’ (Stern, cited in Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 11). Qualitative research and analysis can also, as expressed by Glaser (1992), ‘give the intricate, most relevant, and problematic details of the phenomenon’ (p. 12).

Qualitative methods, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998), consist of three major components: (1) data, which come from various sources such as interviews, observations, documents, records and films; (2) procedures for interpreting and organising data, which usually consist of conceptualising and reducing data, elaborating categories in terms of their properties and dimensions, and relating through a series of propositional statements and (3) written or verbal accounts (p. 12).

Strauss and Corbin (2008) believe that qualitative researchers share the following characteristics: ‘A humanist bent, Curiosity, creativity and imagination, A sense of logic, The ability to recognise diversity as well as regularity, A willingness to take risks, The ability to live with ambiguity, The ability to work through problems in the field, An acceptance of the self as a research instrument and Trust in the self and the ability to see value in the work that is produced‘ (p. 13).

For Ellen (2004), qualitative research can be characterised as descriptive research aimed at the development of personal understandings and research accounts that are sensitive to the context and subjective worlds of the participants involved. She includes observations, field notes and interviews as being employed often in the data collection process to allow for the primacy of people’s words. Data analysis can be exploratory and on-going, and the research may often be speculative, with a diversity of written formats (Ellen 2004).
As the real world experience is the focus, a qualitative approach allows for the complexity that naturally occurs in everyday life, it can reveal how all parts can work together to form a whole (Merriam 1998), and it allows for the importance of interpretation from the individual’s perspective (Stake 1995). Qualitative research ‘champions the interaction of researcher and phenomena’ (Stake 1995, p. 95). It recognises that invalidities and advocacies are always present, and opposes the goal of, as well as the presumption of sanitisation (Stake 1995). The researcher focuses on the quality of activities and processes that are identified, thereby allowing a more profound comprehension of the situation (Stake 1995), which is a motivational concern for this research with applicability to Grounded Theory methodology.

Qualitative approaches, and more particularly, the use of Grounded Theory methodology allow for this exploration, as the focus is on discovery rather than measurement, which enables researchers ‘to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives’ (Berg 2001, p. 7). Qualitative research methodologies recognise that people interpret their ‘realities’ differently, rather than purely assuming one objective reality. Therefore, the focus is on understanding the perspectives of the research participants, and identifying how they make sense of the activities and processes in a non-routine occurrence in their everyday lives.

There is a range of qualitative methodologies that could have been chosen for this research. Many qualitative methodologies, such as case study and ethnography, concentrate on rich description of what is happening for participants. However, the aim of the current study is not to provide a rich description, but the generation of a substantive theory, which will help to explicate behavioural patterns rather than describe them (Stake 1995). Therefore, Glaserian Grounded Theory methodology was deemed most suitable.

2.11 Addressing Potential Bias

I have attempted to mitigate bias through trying to remain cognisant of some of my own experiences and the beliefs and assumptions that I may bring to the research process, including data interpretation; and through providing insight into my biases and the
values that I believe could affect my interpretation of data. In locating myself as a researcher, I acknowledge that however open and reflective I am, biases that I may have overlooked, or that remain hidden from my probing, may still be in existence.

As a long-term state secondary school teacher, I have been aware of the issue of workplace stress, the suffering of injured teachers and the mechanics of the Workers' Compensation scheme instituted to ‘protect’ these teachers. Having been a WorkCover stress claimant, I have direct knowledge of the WorkCover policy, the difficulties in traversing it, the differing responses claimants have to it and the values they bring to the claims process.

Having completed a Bachelor of Education degree, including a substantial research report concerning teacher stress, I have been attenuated to the potential for bias. Additionally, it provided me with the skills applicable to interviewing, observation and the importance of focusing on the participants' needs and what was important to them, rather than imposing my own values. Lipson (1991) writes that ‘good interviewing and careful listening; astute observation and interpretation on several levels simultaneously (such as verbal and non-verbal behaviour, meaning and context); and the intentional use of self … will yield better data‘ (p. 77). This awareness of the potential for bias, combined with my interviewing experience, has given me the confidence to use these methods in conjunction with Grounded Theory methodology.

Finally, I believe in the power of being open and reflective about myself and my actions, as I consider that it is this process that enables me to continue learning and developing as a human being. I therefore value this in other people, and found the interviews where people opened up and reflected on their own experience, reactions and values to be the most interesting personally. I had to work harder to ensure that I remained engaged with those interviewees who were less open with their responses. This openness and reflection on my own experiences has meant that I have been able to use Grounded Theory methods, in particular in-depth interviewing, to full advantage.
2.12 Conclusion

I have adumbrated the various theoretical perspectives that have influenced the choice of a research methodology for this study. I have explained why the research paradigm was chosen and provided an explanation and rationale for the selection of the ontological and epistemological positions. Further, I have presented and discussed some of the different paradigms that have influenced qualitative research, given an account of Symbolic Interactionism and validated its selection for this study. Finally, I have outlined the differences between Glaserian and Straussian Grounded Theory; and provided a description of Grounded Theory methodology, locating it within a post positivist framework in order to situate the current research objectives and the choice of methodology and methods.

The next chapter outlines Grounded Theory methods as applied in my research journey, and demonstrates the trials and tribulations, as well as the successes that affected the research, and the ultimate outcome of the development of a substantive theory of _Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!_
Chapter 3: Data Collection Methods and Analysis

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the processes that were followed using Grounded Theory methodology to establish the substantive theory of Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act! The chapter details the processes involved in gaining ethics approval, collecting data, coding and categorising, memoing, site spreading, selective coding and theorising; leading to the emergence of the core category and Basic Social Process of Continual Resolving. The chapter also follows the path that my own learning took, as a novice grounded theorist, and demonstrates the development of my understanding and knowledge of Grounded Theory methods.

The challenge of learning Grounded Theory methods, such as memoing and selective coding precipitated excitement and anxiety as I grappled with the emergent theory and the application of these methods. I experienced feelings of frustration and anxiety due to the slow recruitment of participants and the challenges of identifying the Basic Social Process. These feelings were transformed into phases of excitement and anticipation with another breakthrough in the emerging theory and my growing understanding of the methodology.

Glaser’s (1998) exhortation, in relation to learning Grounded Theory, that the researcher needs to ‘just do it’ and learn from the experience, was a driving force for me in the creation of new theory. It encouraged me to surmount methodological challenges, such as using an inductive approach, coding and categorising, and the positioning of literature reading.

The challenges for any researcher seeking to employ Grounded Theory as a research methodology are formidable (Dick 2004; McCarthy 1999). Dick (2004) states that the ‘labour intensiveness of the procedures of the management and processing of data and the development of theory’ (p. 3) necessitates great dedication. The researcher has to make Grounded Theory work for them and for the specific context and circumstances of...
their research topic (McCarthy 1999). Thus, it was with some understandable
trepidation that I embarked upon the data collection process for this research.

3.2 Ethical Issues

There were many ethical issues to consider when designing this study. They included
issues pertaining to informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, the potential for
litigation and the requirement for harm minimisation for participants and other
stakeholders.

Past WorkCover recipients could be classified as a vulnerable group. Some were taking
medication related to their claim, and therefore, sensitivity and consideration are
paramount. Having been a past claimant, I was highly aware of some of the issues
confronting, or having previously confronted the participants. Further, having
completed the human ethics application, I gained a better understanding of the potential
risks involved for the participants. According to the criteria for determining the risk and
effects on the participants, the risk was deemed low.

3.3 Ethics Approval

The Application for Ethics Approval of a Research Protocol was submitted in hard
copy, by post, in December 2009, and approval was obtained from the Human Research
Ethics Committee at Swinburne University of Technology in March 2010 (see
Appendix M). Following submission of the initial ethics application, I was advised that
amendments were required. Some of the Human Research Ethics Committee’s concerns
were the need to ensure participant confidentiality, potential for psychological distress
caused by questioning the participants, and the damage to myself as a researcher
through potential litigation relating to the research. These issues were addressed by
assuring the committee that Swinburne University of Technology’s data security
procedures would be upheld, and that privacy principles would be closely adhered to as
outlined in Section 14 of the Privacy Act 1988, Australian Commonwealth Government. Consequently, ethics approval was granted.
In order for informed consent to be given, participants must be provided with all the relevant information pertaining to the research; including a statement on the risks and benefits of participation. Participants must sign this to give informed consent. Participants who contacted me and expressed an interest in participating in the research were provided with the participant information statement, and a participant consent form (either electronically, in hard copy or both), and given some space and time to read these. They were given the option of contacting me to confirm their participation and arrange a suitable time to conduct the interview. Participants were required to complete a consent form prior to the interview.

3.4 Privacy and Confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality were maintained at all times; pseudonyms were used, and no identifying information was included in the thesis. As the university is subject to the Victorian Information Privacy and Health Records Act as well as the Commonwealth Privacy Act, and in particular, the Information/Health/National Privacy principles, it was paramount that privacy and confidentiality were upheld, and that participants’ claims were finalised.

3.5 Anonymity

Each participant was given a pseudonym to maintain anonymity in accordance with the procedure observed in many studies.

3.6 Harm Minimisation

There were many ethical considerations relevant to this study. The main one related to the psychological consequences of participation. There was the potential for both interviewee and interviewer to suffer psychological distress during, or upon completion of the interview due to conflicting emotions in the retelling of their claims experience. The risks were minimised by addressing and discussing this issue, and by explaining this possibility to the participants within the participation consent form. Participants
were also advised of the psychological counselling available at Swinburne Institute of Technology.

3.7 Sample

Initially the sample was restricted to Victorian state secondary teachers; however, following the lack of response to the initial recruitment, the sample was expanded to include Victorian state primary school teachers. Metropolitan Melbourne was the convenient geographical area from which to draw recruits; however, the limiting nature of this required participants to be sought from the State of Victoria. All participants resided in the Melbourne metropolitan area during their claim.

The criteria for inclusion in the research were:

1) The respondent must have been employed at a Victorian state school when their WorkCover stress claim was lodged.
2) The respondent’s WorkCover stress claim must have been finalised.
3) The respondent’s WorkCover stress claim must have occurred during the years 2000–2010.

3.7.1 Sample Size

There are a variety of opinions on the sample size in qualitative research however, Patton (2002) summarises the debate most accurately by stating that there are no rules regarding sample size in qualitative research in congruence with Glaser’s position. There is agreement with qualitative research that the amount of rich in-depth data collection is a determinant of validity, rather than the sample size (Mores 1994 & Patton 2002). A small sample may provide adequate rich in-depth data, but the adequacy is judged in the context of the specific study (Patton 2002).

3.8 The Interview Process

At the outset of a Grounded Theory study there is uncertainty about the number of interviews needed. What is required is saturation emerging from the data at a certain
point (Streubert & Carpenter 1999). In Grounded Theory, saturation is achieved when there is no new conceptual information available to produce new codes or to add to existing codes (Streubert & Carpenter 1999). The pilot research I conducted was used to make assumptions about the number of interviewees that might be sufficient to achieve theoretical saturation. This type of preparation is termed purposive sampling (McCann & Clark 2003a), a sampling technique based on the existing knowledge about potential participants.

The interview process itself was wonderfully exhilarating and rewarding, and I came to accept that the research interview is a form of discourse; and as such, jointly produced by both interviewer and interviewee (Mischler 1986). Having a background in broadcast and film-making gave me the self-confidence and skills necessary to enable the interviews to proceed smoothly, to elicit meaningful responses and to mitigate any unease that participants may have experienced. Participants were also extremely generous with their time.

Participants engaged with me in an honest and trustworthy mode. Initially many of them commented that they would have nothing much or of any significance to contribute. This proved false—all of the participants were valuable, producing much interesting and insightful comment on the WorkCover process, as addressed by both the scheduled interview and in conventional exchanges before and after the scheduled interview. Data collection was supplemented by notes that were made about telephone conversations prior to the interview and exchanges via email. Together, these additional data sources contributed to theory development. However, telephone conversations allowed closer rapport and understanding to be established. The ability to hear each other’s voice allowed for the interpretation of modulation, pitch, tonal inflections and speech patterns; this meant that participants concerns could be gauged, and efforts could be made to assuage the participants‘ apprehension. Communicating with the participants prior to the face-to-face interview contributed to establishing rapport and better understanding of the requirements of their participation, meaning they were at some ease wherever the interview took place.
Participants were appreciative of the opportunity to discuss their claim, and to participate in research that could lead to positive change in the WorkCover claims process. Participants were comfortable and reassured by being able to speak with a person who also had direct experience with the stress claims process.

Use of a Grounded Theory approach with techniques such as ‘Big Ear Listening’ (Glaser 2001) allowed me to enter the participants‘ experience as closely as possible (Glaser & Strauss 1967). ‘Big Ear Listening‘ directs the interviewer to encourage the interviewee to expand upon comments made during the formal interview. It promotes active listening by the interviewer, eschewing simple reliance upon prepared questions; it does not filter information and it enables a fuller exploration of the experiences or observations made by the interviewee.

I hoped that in the words of Paolo Freire, my mode of inquiry would do the following: not only investigate how experience is shaped, experienced and endured in particular social forms, such as schools, but also how particular apparatuses of power produce forms of knowledge that legitimate a particular kind of truth and way of life (Freire in Giroux 1988, p. xxxv).

3.9 Participant Recruitment

3.9.1 Stage One

The selection of recruitment bodies was initially directed through an agency, with whom I had a professional and personal connection. This produced a cohort of participants who had some form of connection. The nature of the interviews required participants who were both willing and interested in the research topic to talk at some length about their experiences. As Watson (1993) notes, the demands of research involving long tape-recorded interviews usually rule[s] out conventional survey approaches to sampling where the interviewer is obliged to cajole his/her pre-selected subject into cooperation‘ (p. 416). Information relating to the purpose of this research, and the request for assistance in participant recruitment was emailed to a Melbourne law firm and to the Australian Education Union (AEU), using Swinburne University of
Technology’s letterhead in adherence with procedural requirements. These bodies were selected to source participants because they have much knowledge and experience of the WorkCover claims process. The AEU, as an existing professional body, has an extensive network of people, associations and expertise from which to draw.

3.9.2 Stage Two

An employee of the law firm with whom I had a connection replied expeditiously, stating that due to client confidentiality they could not assist in my recruitment process, but wished me success in my research. The AEU official that I contacted replied that clarification would be sought with senior AEU officers as to the appropriate role for the union’s involvement and on the best way to approach recruitment. They responded quite promptly, directing me to make contact with the publications officer.

After consultation with the publications officer, it was agreed that the union would place a recruitment advertisement, at no cost to me due to my membership with the AEU, in the next issue of the bi-monthly AEU NEWS magazine (see Appendix B) and the next Internet-based electronic fortnightly E-newsletter (see Appendix O), thereby circulating my advertisement to a wide audience using two modes of distribution: hard copy and electronic. The AEU NEWS advertisement was placed in the Occupation, Health and Safety page. Both recruitment notices were published in August 2010 to increase the possibility of a high response rate due to the approaching September spring school holidays.

Upon contacting another AEU official, I was given permission to use the AEU’s Occupation, Health and Safety conference, held in Melbourne in August 2010, to recruit potential participants. Following further discussions with the AEU’s Occupation, Health and Safety officer, it was agreed that a recruitment notice would be placed in all the delegates’ conference information packs, which the Occupation, Health and Safety officer kindly arranged for me.
3.9.3 Stage Three

Within a week of posting the recruitment advertisements, one potential participant made contact; then, a response hiatus ensued. The slowness and lack of response indicated that people were reluctant or hesitant to become involved. The recruitment approach was reassessed, and it was expanded to reach teachers who did not have a current or past connection with the AEU, or a current connection with Victorian state schools. Recruitment was via community groups and social networks that I had a connection with, both in person and over the Internet. A ‘snowball’ approach was adopted to expand the recruitment further, where persons known to the researcher were initially asked by the researcher to nominate one or more other people who would be willing to participate in the research.

My academic supervisor used this approach to recruit one participant, and following every interview, each participant was asked if they could nominate anyone who might be willing to participate in the research.

Within a fortnight, two more prospective participants made contact by email after having seen the recruitment advertisement in the AEU NEWS. A further participant was found by contacting an injured workers’ group via letter. After approximately two weeks, email correspondence was received from a person connected to Swinburne University of Technology, who assisted with the recruitment of another participant.

Seeking to attract further participants, a long-standing Melbourne community radio station was contacted, and I announced on two talk-back programmes that participants were required for my research; my email address was given as a contact point. Consideration was given to the type of audience that could be listening to the radio station at a given day and time; therefore, the decision was made to use a weekday programme and a weekend programme in an attempt to reach as diverse an audience as possible, thereby increasing the possibility of recruitment. Having broadcast experience with the radio station used made the live on-air recruitment less intimidating; however, both my on-air requests generated no responses.
The challenge relating to recruitment was eased again by contacting the officers of the AEU, who had assisted me before, as well as another officer who I had been advised to contact via email. The publications officer offered to place another recruitment notice (see Appendix C) in the next issue of the AEU NEWS, the November issue, and in the next E-magazine (see Appendix P), with no cost to me again—my gratitude knew no bounds.

Email contact was again used to request recruitment assistance from a federal AEU officer and a Victorian parliamentarian, who had previously conducted research into workplace stress for a Master of Arts degree. However, this also failed to recruit any participants.

Following the Christmas break, a Masters degree holder suggested recruiting in the online magazine of an alumni association; however, this failed to generate a response. In April 2011, online social networking was employed to recruit and contact (via email) a rehabilitation agency used by WorkCover insurance companies, but prospective participants failed to respond. Finally, using the Internet and contacts from an environment and sports group, the final three participants were recruited.

Following all recruitment activities, ten participants were recruited. In retrospect, the use of a variety of recruitment strategies at the outset of the recruitment process would have enabled the greatest number of participants to respond, rather than restricting recruiting to a limited number of recruitment bodies or people, and then making adjustments as the process continued.

### 3.10 Interviewing

When the potential participants initially made contact, usually via email, they were thanked profusely and provided with a brief outline of the research and the aims of the research, and assured that only one hour of their time was needed for the interview.

Although each participant was generous with their time, it was indicated by many that up to an hour-long interview would be all they could manage. One participant
announced at the outset of the interview that they had limited time that afternoon; however, another interview could be scheduled if necessary (it was not necessary). An interview schedule was used to assist with time management.

Following the decision to participate, the participant was provided with a participant information statement (see Appendix D), a consent form (see Appendix F) and a copy of the representative questions (see Appendix G). Once the potential participant had read the information provided and agreed to participate, they made further contact with me. A time, date and place for the interview that was convenient and comfortable for the participant was then arranged.

After the interview parameters had been set, the interviews took place at a venue of participants’ choice. Placing the fewest restrictions and conditions on participants was designed to make them feel as comfortable as possible, and to engender a sense of choice and inclusion for them.

When negotiating an interview time and venue, it is prudent to have a contingency plan in place, in case of unforeseen circumstances arising. It is advisable to carry the participant’s telephone number and a mobile telephone while travelling to the interview venue, in case of a delay, to reduce the participant’s and one’s own anxiety; also allow for more than sufficient time to reach the destination. Prior to departing for each interview, a self-designed check list was carried out to circumvent forgetfulness and equipment dysfunction, which was inclusive of testing all equipment, including the computer battery, and counting all participant forms.

My earliest framing of what I wanted to know was drawn from three pilot interviews undertaken for my Master of Education degree. The following questions were drawn:

- How much agency did you feel you had in the WorkCover stress claims process?
- Was the process inclusive with respect to your needs?
- Was the process easily navigable?
Following the first interview, and upon consultation with my supervisor, these questions were reassessed, and adjustments were made to their order to elicit a more expansive response.

All interviews were recorded using a laptop computer with a small removable microphone that could be attached to the interviewee, allowing for greater flexibility, manoeuvrability and portability, which was essential if I was cycling or using public transport. The computer could use mains power or a battery, also allowing for greater flexibility and an extension lead was always taken to the interview venue in case it was required.

As the initial four interviews proceeded, data were collected and analysed. Transcription and analysis took place as soon as practically possible after each interview to remain fresh in my mind, and some sentences were listened to repeatedly if they were slightly inaudible, or if clarity was sought.

Conceptual categories emerged from the process of data analysis, and decisions regarding the conduct of further interviews were based on the emerging theory (Glaser 1978). When interviewing, Kvale (1996) suggests that questions should be framed using key words such as ‘how’ and ‘what’. By asking ‘how’ and ‘what’ questions, spontaneity from interviewees is encouraged, rather than allowing speculative accounts of why an event took place. However, as participants had been given a copy of the interview questions prior to the interview, spontaneity and speculation were minimised, and a more considered explanation of their experience with the claims process was given.

A key factor in conducting interviews is to establish a rapport with the interviewee (Minichiello et al. One way of achieving rapport is to tell participants that you believe they have something important to say (Minichiello et al. 1997), which is usually the case. The creation of this rapport was attempted before the interview commenced, during the interview and upon completion of the interview.

Prior to commencement of the interview, the participant was advised and encouraged to answer all questions freely, or to forego answering any questions if they caused
discomfort to them. They were reminded to feel free to withdraw from the interview at any time, or to request a short hiatus during the interview if needed. One participant required this. The duration of the interviews were shortened or lengthened as the situation demanded. A conversational tone was maintained throughout the interview and probes such as ‘mm’ or ‘I see’ were used to convey to the participant that they were being heard and taken seriously. Frequently used probes included time sequence, such as ‘and then?’ or detail, such as ‘tell me more about … that’s very interesting’, and clarification, such as ‘Could you explain more? But you said earlier’ (Schatzman & Strauss 1973, p. 74). Some of these strategies were successfully included.

According to Schreiber (2001), the interview should finish with a key question, such as, ‘Would you like to include anything else?’ (p.168). This ensures closure is tentative, and allows for the provision of a follow up interview if necessary, as was outlined in the consent form. Thus, I completed the interview with an opportunity for participants to mention anything else they saw as relevant, important or perhaps thought of later.

An important skill in interviewing is active listening on behalf of the interviewer. Seeking clarification during the interview contributes to the collection of trustworthy information, and communicates to the interviewee that the interviewer is actually listening to what has been said (Kvale 1996). At no time was the interviewee deemed untrustworthy; no miscommunication occurred, nor was antagonism perceived. In using a Grounded Theory approach, the focus of questions may change, due to a move from purposive sampling at the outset of the research, to theoretical sampling (Patton, 2002), both of which are outlined in a later section of this chapter. The focus of questions may also change as categories and theories develop (McCann & Clark 2003b). During the course of this research, changes were made to the questions (see Appendix G) at each stage of analysis to inform the research better and to include questions that elucidated the emergent categories, such as questions regarding covert surveillance. Approximate time lengths were included in later interviews.

The four initial interviews were analysed using the Grounded Theory method of constant comparative analysis (the method by which the data collection, coding and analysis occur simultaneously, as described in Glaser & Strauss 1964). Some of the
interviewees were recontacted later in the coding process to confirm the development of categories and to verify saturation.

The first interview was undertaken in September 2010, during the winter school holidays. This interviewee has been assigned the pseudonym Jack to protect anonymity. Immediately following the interview, in the privacy of my car, I recorded a memo:

Remember to relax and maintain composure to exhibit confidence and capability. Was understanding and willing for further contact and would like a copy of the final thesis. Has some bitterness towards the Education Department.

3.11 Developing the Theory

3.11.1 Coding

For Dey (1999), the whole question of coding is open to critique, because the process of transforming complex data into useable information through coding conventions may not only lead to elucidation, but in many instances, may be a cause of obfuscation. Further, for Dey (1999), issues happen around the selective nature of this process, and the tension between the delimitation of the analysis to keep it manageable. It is an exhaustive and on-going examination of all vehicles of inquiry. Therefore, with these reservations in mind, the process of coding was undertaken using the strategy of moving through the category process to coding, to make meaningful sense of the data. Viable codes were used to the extent that they facilitate the sense making process (Dey 1999).

Glaser (1978) posits two types of codes: substantive codes, which include open and selective coding, and theoretical codes. “Substantive codes conceptualise the empirical substance of the area of research’ (p. 55), they ‘grab by denoting recognisable patterns’ (Glaser 2005, p. 12). Substantive coding consists of open coding, which occurs prior to the development of a core variable, and selective coding, which is undertaken when the researcher has established a core variable from which time-delimiting coding starts relating to only those variables significant for the core variable.
3.11.2 Managing Coding

Coding was managed in two ways; both methods enabled tracking the data under the emergent categories and sub-categories to build up a thematic picture of the links between them. Having a clear understanding of the differentiation between substantive and theoretical codes was paramount to my construction of _Continual Resolving_ as the Basic Social Process. Time was required for reading, re-reading and processing the knowledge that I acquired.

3.11.3 Open Coding

Open coding generates categories and their properties; the analyst determines how categories vary dimensionally (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Open coding is the necessary first stage in analysing the data, where the aim is to code for as many categories as might fit, and code different incidents into as many categories as possible (Glaser 1978). It both verifies and saturates individual codes (Glaser 1978). Emergent new categories and new incidences will fit existing categories (Glaser 1978). Glaser emphasises that questioning during the early stages is un-structured and open-ended, with the objective of allowing participants maximum freedom for framing their own responses. In open coding the analyst _runs the data open_ by coding different incidents into as many categories as possible (Glaser 1978). Glaser (1978) recommends that a set of questions be kept in mind during coding.

Following the transcription of the interviews using Microsoft Word, initial analysis was used, known as Level 1 coding. Level 1 codes incorporate codes such as open codes, where data are broken down into small pieces opening up the research; substantive codes, where the substance of the data is codified; and _in vivo_ codes, which use the language of participants. This is known as fracturing the data. Initially, open coding was the approach taken with each interview transcript to identify discrete items on a line-by-line basis to come to an understanding of their meaning in terms of both content and process, and to allow for full conceptual coverage; it was the approach taken with each interview transcript. Action descriptors or gerunds were used in an attempt to identify
the concepts being highlighted in the data. This helps to avoid just being descriptive (Charmaz 2006).

Open coding ends when the analyst decides upon the core category (Glaser 1978). From this point on, the analyst delimits the coding to include only those variables that have true relevance to the core category in highly significant ways (Glaser 1978). This is known as selective coding. The core category becomes the guide to further data collection and theoretical sampling. Finally, all the categories are woven together to form a theory via the use of theoretical coding. Such codes are also emergent, not preconceived. Glaser lists 18 such codes in *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978–82) which are documented later in this chapter, and several more codes in *Doing Grounded Theory* (1998).

When appropriate, _in vivo_ codes were used. These codes are short quotations from the interview. _In vivo_ codes effectively identify a specific area of concern for the participant, which allows for the conceptualisation of a feeling in a participant's response, or for the better establishment of the context in which it occurred. The identification of _in vivo_ codes in open coding also allows for the conceptualisation of shared meanings held by participants based on their experiences of the WorkCover stress claims process. An example of an _in vivo_ code from Interview 1 is as follows:

_I then had to go to a GP to get a referral. I had already been attending the psychologist, but she was reluctant to get involved with a WorkCover stress case, as was a GP I went to as well. I found it frustrating (September 2010)._  

_In vivo_ codes may be generated either directly from the participants' phrases, or from their exact words, to assist in the description of their day-to-day experiences. _In vivo_ codes are important because they express something of the participant's life and social systems. These codes are representative of a conceptualisation of the feelings of participants. For example, in Interview 4, Wanda stated, _I felt a lot of hostility towards me in that environment_, when referring to a meeting with a rehabilitation provider. This suggested the idea of a hostile context for the WorkCover process.
Implementing the questions posed by Glaser (1978) including 'What is this data a study of?' and 'What is actually happening in the data?' (p.57) enabled me to explore what might be beneath the surface meaning of the data.

Open coding is an exhaustive and time-consuming process. Examples of open codes generated from the first interview are feeling undervalued, feeling deprived, dealing with bureaucracy and having to substantiate claims (September 2010). Examples from the second interview include needing to purchase communication and copying equipment, feeling powerless, feeling overburdened and needing support (September/October, 2010). Examples of open codes from the third interview are dealing with aggression, finding a new career, dealing with stigma and dealing with intrusion (September/October, 2010). Examples from the fourth interview include feeling under pressure, feeling isolated, dealing with many agencies, feeling maligned and feeling coercion to comply (October 2010).

### 3.12 Emergent Themes in the Pilot Interviews

Thematic analysis refers to the construction of themes. That is, core or central theoretical concerns that link several related categories to explain key aspects of the process.

The initial identification of emergent themes was carried out following the coding of the three interviews undertaken in the pilot stage of this research. These themes were conceptualised to provide an understanding of participants’ main concerns, allowing for grouping into broad substantive codes and representation of the first steps in establishing a core category. This group of emerging themes included the following:

- Pressure
- Disadvantage
- Oppression
- Isolation.
3.12.1 Theme 1: Pressure

There were many shared perceptions held by the participants regarding the pressurised nature of the process. Each participant spoke of the pressure they felt throughout the process, which was contextual and procedural, and generated through their exchanges with personnel. This pressure varied in duration and intensity throughout the process.

3.12.2 Theme 2: Disadvantage

Each participant felt distinctly disadvantaged within this process, while the _opposing side_, as they interpreted it, was perceived as distinctly advantaged. This sense of disadvantage was evidenced at their claims activating stage, continuing though to their claims settlement stage. This disadvantage could be felt with different personnel and in different contexts. It could shift between sites, personnel and contexts, and was the cause of much angst.

3.12.3 Theme 3: Oppression

Oppression was identified as the main consequence of a differentiated power relationship underwritten by the threat of litigation, the *Accident Compensation Act* and a rigid hierarchical structure within the claims process. All participants acknowledged the negative psychological effects of this oppression.

3.12.4 Theme 4: Isolation

Participants spoke of the personal and social isolation they endured as a claimant. However, their isolation with respect to the claims process was mitigated by having an alternative close personal and supportive relationship, outside of the process. The level of isolation was also dependent upon the degree of the psychological injury, as well as on the availability and maintenance of a support structure.
3.13 Open Codes Collected from Data

Incident coding is the first coding format; it was engaged to facilitate the identification of all substantive material in the initial and subsequent interviews. The following excerpts from interviews one and four and their coding demonstrate this identification, to provide edification concerning the process of code derivation.

3.13.1 Excerpt 1

Interview 1; transcribed and coded in the first stage of analysis (September–November 2010):

Yeah, that's right, the conciliation panel. But I found a psychologist who had experience in the field and making WC claims, and she was very supportive. My GP was also very supportive. I had a documented history of medical concerns related to stress and I had to of course go to what they call an independent medical examination by a psychiatrist, and he was quite a reasonable kind of bloke; and when I read his report I felt that he was seriously coming from the employer's point of view. He was doing his best to make recommendations that suited the employer rather than the employee. However, I had a lot of substantiating evidence through this highly qualified and very expensive psychologist who I attended, and who in the end, I didn't have to pay, but I had to pay them after each consultation, which was a strain, and in fact, I got 12 months of counselling which was included as part of my claim's resolution.

The codes identified in Excerpt 1 were identifying right support, dealing with closed ranks, coping with financial 'stretching', getting medical support, substantiating, disillusioning, feeling insecure and feeling unequal.
3.13.2 Excerpt 2

Interview 1; transcribed and coded in first stage of analysis (October–November 2010).

Well, my GP recommended a local psychiatrist, who I subsequently learned had experience with WorkCover claims. This psychiatrist was supportive even though I had resentment about having to use one, and my GP was very caring and helpful, and had kept a record of my stress-related claims. I felt very comfortable with him, but was always anxious when obtaining the required monthly certificates of capacity from him; it was probably due to my insecurity regarding the on-going acceptance of my claim.

There was some initial confusion regarding the payment of my psychiatrist’s bills by the Victorian WorkCover Authority; I think he had to wait a while for the payment. I felt uncomfortable when the reception staff commented on it. I just hope that he was eventually paid.

The codes identified in Excerpt 2 were finding the right support, getting medical support, maintaining records, processing, anxiety, substantiating, payment confusion, feeling insecure and feeling unequal.

Drawing from these excerpts, clusters or groupings of codes were identified, and the emergence of a provisional core category was advanced. Open coding ended when the core category was identified. From this point on, the coding was delimited to include only those variables that related to the core category: this is known as selective coding. The core category guided further data collection and theoretical sampling, and finally all the categories were interwoven to establish a theory.

3.14 Core Category: The Glaserian School

The core category is the "theoretical formulation that represents the ‘Continual Resolving’ of the main concern of the category’ (Glaser 2001, p. 199). Employing the process of constant comparison will eventually lead to the emergence of a core category. The core category is central; it accounts for the variation in the pattern of
behaviour, reoccurs frequently in the data and relates meaningfully and easily to other categories. Constant comparison generates a pattern that is named as a category (Glaser 1998). Glaser (1998) stipulates that categories must be carefully generated from the patterns of meaning coming from constant comparisons of micro incidents, not macro situations’ (p. 143). The process of constant comparison, however long it takes, will lead to the emergence of a core category.

The following are Glaser’s (1978) criteria for determining a core category, which I refer to extensively to identify the core category in this research:

1) It must be central and account for a large portion of the variation in the pattern of behaviour‘ (p. 95). Centrality is a necessary condition to make it core.

2) It must reoccur frequently in the data. Lack of occurrence does not render it uninteresting; however, it is not considered a core.

3) It will take considerably more time to saturate, as it is related to many categories and occurs with frequency.

4) It must relate meaningfully and with ease to other categories.

5) It will contain clear and grabbing implications for formal theory.

6) It must have considerable carry-through, and not lead to dead ends.

7) It must have variability; that is, it must be highly dependently variable in degree, dimension and type. Conditions vary it easily. It is readily modifiable through these dependent variations’ (p. 96).

8) Core category is a dimension of the problem.

9) It must account for variation in the problematic behaviour, and is also a dimension of the problem; thus, it explains itself and its own variation. It must not arise from sociological interest or deductive, logical elaboration.

10) The analyst must begin to see the core category in all relations.

11) It can be any kind of theoretical code, such as process, condition or dimensions (pp. 95–96).

The choice of a core category can be intimidating because of the fear that the choice of a wrong core category may undermine the entire research process. The failure to choose a core category will leave the researcher with purely descriptive material, and hence no possibility of theory development, which is something to be avoided. Built into the
process of the identification of the core category is a safety net, allowing the researcher to forewarn about the choice of a core category that is not really a core category, which quickly becomes evident when the steps for judging the core are applied. Continuing coding and undertaking constant comparisons demonstrate the limits of a false core category; and patience and perseverance on the part of the researcher is enabling of the true emergence of the core category (Glaser 1978). Application of the criteria for core category judgement mitigated the choice of a wrong category. Once the core category has emerged, open coding turns to selective coding (Glaser 2001).

While coding data, a core category was sought, which _sums up in a pattern of behaviour the substance of the what [sic] is going on in the data_ (Glaser 1978, p. 94). The core category has to be central; it has to appear frequently in the data, and takes more time to reach saturation because it is related to all other categories and occurs frequently. It must have connection with all other categories, have grab and explanatory power, and be completely variable; and it must also be a dimension of the problem. It can be any kind of theoretical code (Glaser 1978). For Glaser (2001) the role of theory is not to generate findings; theory _generates hypotheses about explaining the behaviour from which it was generated_ (p. 5), and further, the core category is conceptually abstract from people, place and time.

### 3.15 Identifying the Core Category

Following the pilot study and the analysis of the first four interviews, patterns of behaviour and commonalities in substantive areas were clearly emerging. It was initially indicated that the core category would be concerned with an imbalanced power relationship and the difficulties connected to resolving it. Coded data from each new interview were added to the existing categories, and constant comparisons were made between each new incident and existing examples to ascertain whether that category should be expanded, divided or renamed. It was evident that a power imbalance was accountable for the WorkCover anomalies in the WorkCover claims process.

Glaser (1978) advises that it is not until the Basic Social Process has been firmly established, that the researcher can go outside the substantive area to other data sources,
such as the literature, for comparisons. Nevertheless, I read the *The Accident Compensation Review 2008* and a published paper to compare if my feeling regarding the core category held legitimacy.

Overcoming my hesitation regarding the identification of the core category, and being mindful of Glaser’s suggestion that discovering the core category utilising his approach requires little effort due to it emerging in a fairly obvious way, the core category was chosen. The core category was identified as „Continual Resolving”, because it provided a useful understanding of how participants‘ concerns are linked by a common pattern. This core category seemed central, appeared frequently in the data, was connected to all the other categories and had explanatory power, as expected by Glaser (1978). It linked the two main categories, and the main elements of the main categories were present in each sub-category.

### 3.16 Selective Coding

Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining theory (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Open coding turns to selective coding once the core category has emerged (Glaser 2001). Selective coding does not commence until the core variable or category has been established, and future incidents can then be compared to the core category. Selective coding changes the focus from coding everything in the data to only coding data that relates to the core category and its related categories and properties.

In selective coding, data that were disaggregated throughout the open coding process are reassembled to allow a more complete explanation of the process to be given; this is a substantial change from open coding. The researcher focuses upon coding only for a core category and its related categories and properties, as opposed to coding everything in the data (Glaser 2001). Selectively coding for a core variable entails reducing coding to include only those variables that relate to the core variable in highly significant ways that are useful in the construction of a parsimonious theory.

Glaser (1978) writes that selective coding means _that_ the analyst delimits his coding to only those variables that relate to the core variable in sufficiently significant ways to be
used in a parsimonious theory' (p. 61). Identified variables become a guide for further data collection and theoretical sampling. After the core category was established, data were sought to densify the sub-categories, as indicated by the modification of the interview questions (see Appendix H) between coding stages.

When open coding was complete on data from the first round of interviews, it was compared with themes from the pilot study, and progressed via selective coding to identify commonalities or divergences, which allowed for the delimitation of the study. The main categories were then further conceptualised, and the main and sub-categories, were read and re-read to search for patterns and emergent theory, and to theorise about what was actually occurring in the data. The process of writing memos became increasingly more important for exploring what was happening in the data, and raising my thinking from the descriptive level to the conceptual. The following memo illustrates this transition:

I think I need to look again at this whole category to see if my own interpretations are skewing it what are the specific conditions that precipitate self-maintenance.

Following open coding of the pilot study and the first round of interviews, the main categories were identified. These are listed below with some examples of the open codes used in their selection:

- Self-Stripping: feeling unworthy, feeling a sense of identity loss, feeling undeserving, feeling undervalued.
- Self-Legitimising: dealing with lack of understanding, having communication difficulties, accounting for oneself was humiliating, maintaining evidence.
- Self-Maintaining: finding support, selecting support, maintaining support, having a supportive general practitioner (GP).
- Clarifying: appealing decisions, feeling uninformed, dealing with administrative incompetence, seeking clarification.
- Feeling Oppression: feeling oppressed, feeling pressurised, feelings of hierarchical injustice, suffering anxiety.
• Filling the Gaps: needing help to interpret documents, coping with incomprehension, needing help to interpret correspondence, needing to seek advice.

• Disillusioning: feelings of needing to conform, needing much mental and physical energy and perseverance to continue, feeling resentment, feeling frustrated with the process.

• Controlling: feeling that there was a sense of control at every level of the process, that the control was causal-consequential, and that the claimants had minimal control.

• Bureaucratisation: feelings that the process was too rigid—all decisions had to be authorised by supervisors; perceptions that that there were too many layers of bureaucracy.

• Monitoring: sensing there was overt and covert monitoring, and that each stage of the process contained a monitoring mechanism.

• Administrative incompetence: perceptions that the Victorian WorkCover Authority employees were incompetent, that all correspondence had to be double checked and copies made.

• Experiencing Alienation: claimants felt disengaged from the process; they felt they were a small part of the process, the process was a mystery to them, they lacked understanding of the WorkCover process and felt it was causing them to become socially isolated.

• Experiencing Marginalisation: claimants felt they were on the margins of the process and that the process was intentionally designed to perpetuate this.

Sub-categories of these categories were developed when they could explain specific features of these categories. I consulted my academic supervisor, who advised me to read two specific books by Glaser: *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978) and *The Grounded Theory Perspective: Conceptualization Contrasted with Description* (2001), to re-familiarise myself with his 18 families of categories. This proved to be most useful, and provoked more contemplation and a reappraisal of the selection of categories and sub-categories. It further captured the focus of my attention on the construction of categories that fit, and that would be relevant to an explanation of the WorkCover stress claims.
process. These categories were explored and refined using theoretical sampling and constant comparative analysis.

Upon a serious examination of the core category and the Basic Social Process, a number of steps needed to be undertaken before returning to data collection with the aim of selective coding and densifying the emergent categories from the open coding phase. Each of the categories was continually expanded and reworked, while being mindful of discovering patterns in behaviour, and the observation that a core category ‘sums up in a pattern of behaviour the substance of the what [sic] is going on in the data’ (Glaser 1978, p. 94). Categories were built from the data until saturation was reached. This became evident when no new categories emerged after the completion and analysis of the first four interviews. Continuing interviews and analysis after saturation ensured that the categories were robust and dense.

The selection of a core category can feel overwhelming, given the risk that choice of the wrong core category may undermine the entire research process. However, failure to choose a core category leaves the researcher with purely descriptive material, and hence, no possibility of developing theory.

3.17 Basic Social Process

A Basic Social Process represents a conceptualisation of how participants respond to and resolve their main concern. Glaser (1978) states that Basic Social Processes are ‘fundamental, patterned processes in the organisation of social behaviours which occur over time and go on irrespective of the conditional variation of place‘ (p. 100). Patterns were sought combined with the different conditions that instigate changes in these patterns. That is, the process of addressing the main concern. The Basic Social Process is contextualised; its identification is intended to propose an explanation of the sources, such as conditions and properties in a particularised context. In addition, it is multivariate; that is, it aims to uncover all relevant variables that produce behaviour (Glaser 1978). The Basic Social Process is also the core category; however, not all core categories are Basic Social Processes.
Glaser identifies two types of Basic Social Processes, also termed sub-types (Mullen, cited in Glaser 1996): the basic social psychological process (BSPP) and the basic social structural process (BSSP). The BSPP refers to processes such as ‘becoming’ and ‘passing’, and is highly useful for understanding behaviour (Lowe & Glaser, cited in Glaser 1995). Terms such as ‘managing’ and ‘living with’ were used in theory development for this thesis to present a feeling of how participants experienced the claims process. The BSSP explains the consequences of the BSPP (Lowe & Glaser, cited in Glaser 1995), such as bureaucratisation and routinisation (Mullen, cited in Glaser 1996). Glaser (2005) argues that it is more difficult to be sensitive to BSSPs. For Lowe & Glaser (cited in Glaser 1995), ‘The basic social structural processes explain the consequences of the basic social psychological processes’ (p. 675). For example, the BSPP of control in organisations usually results in the BSSP (Lowe & Glaser, cited in Glaser 1995). Research can be focused on both forms of Basic Social Process (Lowe & Glaser, cited in Glaser 1995).

There are two main ways of locating a Basic Social Process: first, by discovery; and second, by emergent fit (Lowe & Glaser, cited in Glaser 1995). The researcher chooses a very specific social context ‘through the systematic processes of theoretical sampling and the constant comparison method’ (Lowe & Glaser, cited in Glaser 1995, p. 679), and then discovers a core variable, which will hopefully be a Basic Social Process (Lowe & Glaser, cited in Glaser 1995).

The BSPP identified for this research is ‘Continual Resolving’, because it best explains how participants respond to their main concern. In this context, it explains sources such as conditions and properties in a particular context, and is multivariate, meaning that it discovers all the relevant variables that lead to certain behaviours. It identifies how continual resolution was necessitated in order for participants to navigate the WorkCover process and attain outcomes that are more appropriate for themselves.

The identified BSSP is unequal control over power and resources. Glaser posits, ‘Perhaps the BSPP is more prevalent and relevant to understanding behaviour since one does not need the BSSP to understand it, but one usually needs a BSPP to understand the focus on a BSSP’ (Glaser 1978, p. 102). Glaser does caution that this question
should be answered empirically for any particular study. As a process model, _Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!_ contains elements of both a BSSP and a BSPP, as outlined by Glaser.

### 3.18 Identification of the Final Main Categories and Their Sub-Categories

During the stage of selective coding, it was important to continue to densify the data and develop the moderating variables to identify the main conceptual elements of the proposed Grounded Theory. Glaser (1978) informs us that selective coding means _that the analyst delimits his coding to only those variables that relate to the core variable in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory_ (p. 61). The Basic Social Process and core category were now identified; the next step was a search for data that would densify the main categories.

Following the second stage of interviews and coding, selective coding and densifying continued. The main categories identified were reduced to those that would account for all others. Initially, the resulting selected categories were the following:

- Self-Striping
- Legitimating
- Self-Maintaining
- Clarifying
- Feeling Oppression
- Filling the Gaps
- Disillusioning
- Experiencing Alienation
- Experiencing Marginalisation.

After further consideration, it became apparent that the main categories could be _funnelled down_ further. As a result, Filling the Gaps, Disillusioning, Experiencing Marginalisation and Feeling Oppression were eliminated. The main category of Clarifying was reconceptualised as a sub-category of the main category Managing
Alienation. This resulted in identification of the following main categories, which did not alter throughout the final stages of interviewing:

- Resisting Self-Stripping
- Mediating Support Structures
- Constantly Legitimating
- Experiencing Alienation
- Dealing with Bureaucracy
- Confronting Structural Rigidity
- Coping with Lack of Structural Understanding.

Following the completion of all interviews, and through the continual process of selective coding and densification, I again ‘funnelled down’ and reduced the main categories to two. There were two main categories that incorporated elements of all of the seven main categories identified above, to some degree. These were Self and Structure.

I felt that I was indeed thinking in a conceptual way, delimiting concept proliferation and generating a dense theory with parsimony and scope’ (Glaser 2001, p. 193). A brief explanation of each main category and its associated sub-categories and properties will now be considered, with a more comprehensive explanation following in Chapter 4.

3.19 The Self: Sub-Categories and Their Properties

Properties of Resisting Self-Stripping:
- Managing with loss of achievement
- Managing with loss of future
- Managing with loss of lifestyle
- Managing with loss of self-esteem
- Coping with loss of income
- Identity loss
- Managing with loss of value
- Managing with loss of recognition.
Properties of Mediating Support Structures:
- Identifying support sources
- Selecting support
- Integrating with the process
- Managing with a socio-psychological relationship
- Managing with lack of resources
- Maintaining support.

Properties of Constantly Legitimating:
- Managing with WorkCover personnel
- Medical professional legitimation.

Properties of Experiencing Alienation:
- Managing with isolation from colleagues, friends, family and society
- Dealing with lack of understanding
- Dealing with lack of knowledge
- Dealing with lack of resources
- Dealing with clarification
- Dealing with hostile professionals
- Dealing with demystification
- Dealing with discontinuity.

3.20 Structure: Sub-Categories and Their Properties

Properties of Dealing with Bureaucracy:
- Managing with time-lines
- Managing with correspondence
- Surviving surveillance
- Negotiating terminology.
Property of Confronting Structural Rigidity:
- Managing a hierarchical structure.

Properties of Coping with Lack of Structural Understanding:
- Coping with lack of structure
- Managing with lack of legislative and legal understanding
- Managing constituent parts.

The main categories account for all other categories. They are processes on which the Basic Social Process is contingent, and which constitute the substantial Grounded Theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight Rope Act!’ in the context of this study. The process of the identification of the main categories in this Grounded Theory has been clearly documented. This section articulates the process of delimiting in the selection of the final two main categories.

3.21 Theoretical Coding

After consideration of the merits of each of Glaser’s coding families, as presented later in this chapter, the theoretical code identified for use in this Grounded Theory was the process model, because the WorkCover claims process consists of staged progressions. The process model has been described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as ‘a series of evolving sequences of action/interaction that occur over time and space’ (p. 165). Fagerhaugh, (cited in Glaser 1995) sees the Process Family as ‘Developing process analysis which yields theory … it is important because it allows the use of qualitative data in generating theory and does not limit the use of rich data to description only’ (p. 174). Process analysis is also important to this study because it has explanatory power (Fagerhaugh, cited in Glaser 1995), and can be applied to the WorkCover claims process.

Glaser (2005) acknowledges that researchers appear to have the most difficulty at this stage of generating Grounded Theory. The difficulty encountered was mitigated by reading (and re-reading) one of Glaser’s books pertaining to the range and application of theoretical codes. I was mindful that mixed theoretical codes (Glaser 2005) can
emerge as demonstrated by Jones and Noble (2007) with their article tracing the methodological development of Grounded Theory. This provided insights about the possibility of utilising more than one coding family. In their Grounded Theory *Maintaining Competence*, Jones and Noble identify the causal-consequence model and the typology model, as both contributing to a method of best explaining what was occurring in the data.

Glaser suggests that theoretical codes implicitly conceptualise how the substantive codes will relate to each other as interrelated, multivariate hypotheses in accounting for resolving the main action' (1978, p. 163). Further, 'they are emergent and weave the fractured substantive story turned into substantive concepts back into an organised theory' (2005, p. 11). Devoid of substantive codes, theoretical codes are 'empty abstractions' (Glaser 1978, p. 72; 1998, p. 164), and 'It is the interaction between substantial and theoretical coding which characterises Grounded Theory as an analytic inductive research methodology rather conceptual journalism' (Glaser 2005, p. 11).

In 2001, Glaser introduced an additional four theoretical codes, and in 2005, he wrote *The Grounded Theory Perspective III: Theoretical Coding*, introducing 23 new codes with descriptions of each. Reading this book further sensitised me to the task of theoretical coding, added to my armamentarium (Glaser 2005) of theoretical codes and reinforced the importance of staying open to emerging theoretical codes in aiming to reach theoretical completeness.

Typical coding families include process, degree, dimension and type families. These codes are not mutually exclusive (Glaser 1978) and may have considerable overlap (Glaser 1978). A single coding family can also spawn another (Glaser 1978). The grounded theorist needs a solid comprehension of many theoretical codes, which according to Glaser (1978) are not difficult to learn, 'in order to sensitise to rendering explicitly the subtleties of the relationships in his data' (Glaser 1978, p. 73).
3.22 Glaser’s Coding Families

Glaser’s (1978) has 18 coding families, as listed below.

1) The Six C’s: Causes
2) Process
3) The Strategy Family
4) The Interactive Family
5) The Identity–Self Family
6) The Means–Goal Family
7) The Consensus Family
8) The Mainline Family
9) The Ordering or Elaboration Family
10)a. Structural ordering—this is an empirical question: ascending or descending, and in what order
b. Temporal ordering—this is the standard way of ordering categories sequentially
c. Conceptual ordering—this is often used in Grounded Theory in relation to the specifications of concepts, and in the development of properties of categories
11) The Unit Family
12) The Reading Family
13) Models
14) Degree
15) Dimension
16) Type
17) The Interactive Family
18) The Cutting Point (pp. 74–82).

The Process Family was selected for this research because the WorkCover claims process is constituted by many legislatively imposed stages. A memo was recorded to assist in the selection of this theoretical code:

What constitutes the understanding of a phase/stage in a process? Is the process family applicable to the experiences of the WorkCover process?
Initially, the coding families considered as having applicability to this research were the following:

1) The Process Model: process, stages, staging, phases, progressions, passages, gradations, trajectories, chains, transitions, steps, ranks, careers, orderings, sequencings, temporaling, shaping and cycling. A causal-consequence model is a process.

2) The Six C‘s: causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances and conditions. This is the first general code to remember when coding data.

3) The Mainline Family: social control (keeping people in line), recruitment (getting people in), socialisation (training people for participation), stratification (sorting people according to criteria that rank them), status passage (moving people along and getting them through), social organisation (organising the people into groups, aggregates and division of labour) and social order (keeping the organisation of life working normatively); social institutions (clusters of cultural ideas), social interaction (people acting with people), social worlds (symbolic surround of life), social mobility (patterned paths of people‘s movement through society). These codes generate social values in relation to action.

4) The Unit Family: collective, group, nation, organisation, aggregate, situation, society, context, arena, social world, behavioural pattern, territorial units (such as society and family), and positional units (status, role, role-relationship, status-set, role-set, person-set, role partners). These are structural units.

The Process Family includes the sub-processes _anticipation of numbers and types of activities; making judgements of where to condense, delete, or reduce activities; sequential ordering of activities; anticipating obstacles; and, daily and cyclical routing‘ remaining the same in response to the situation or context‘ (Fagerhaugh, cited in Glaser 1995, p. 174). It is constituted by _Major turning points, at times called contingencies or critical junctures‘, which can _affect the process (such as loss of money, home or friends)‘ (Fagerhaugh, cited in Glaser 1995 p. 185). The process is legitimised by having a beginning, and then moving from the beginning to subsequent stages (Willoughby and Keating, cited in Glaser 1995).
3.23 Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is based on the theoretical concerns emerging from simultaneous data collection and coding. It is used to decide ‘where to next’ in the research (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Theoretical sampling means that the researcher gathers more data from the comparison samples to ensure the development and refinement of the emerging categories and themes (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

Generation of a Grounded Theory is always guided by the emerging theory. As data are collected, coded, compared and analysed, the emerging concepts and categories will provide the guidance as to what and where to research next. This is the deductive element in Grounded Theory, where ‘the focus … is on comparisons for discovery’ (Glaser 1978, p38) and deductive techniques are used to aid the inductive process.

Theoretical sampling enables the grounded theorist to collect less data than in other qualitative methodologies, because data collection ‘is controlled and directed to relevance and workability by theoretically sampling for the emerging theory’ (Glaser 1978, p. 47).

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory; it is when the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses the data and decides what data to collect next; and, where to discover them, in order for the emergence of theory development’ (Glaser 1978, p. 36). During the final stages of interviewing, I decided to recontact some early participants to seek clarification to enrich some existing categories, as suggested in theoretical sampling. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define theoretical sampling as follows:

Data gathering driven by concepts derived from the evolving theory and based on the concept of making comparisons, whose purpose is to go to places, people, or events that will maximise opportunities to discover variations among concepts; and, to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimension (p. 201).
Theoretical sampling enables the grounded theorist to reduce data collection more than in other qualitative methodologies, as data collection is controlled and directed to relevance and workability by theoretically sampling for the emerging theory (Glaser 1978, p. 47). Glaser (1978) warns that, particularly for novice grounded theorists, it is safer to sample exclusively within the substantive area until focus on a basic social psychological problem and the process by which it is resolved both have been discovered and stabilised in an emerging theoretical framework (p. 50).

The initial decisions in theoretical sampling are centred only on a general sociological perspective about a substantive area within a specific population, not on a preconceived problem or hypothesis (Glaser 1978). Within the first days of being in the field, the generation of codes commences, hypotheses emerge and their integration begins. A great deal of complex data are analysed during the collection of data—not only after the final collection of data (Glaser 1978)—it is an ongoing process (Glaser 1978). While in field, the researcher continually asks questions regarding the fit, relevance and workability of the emerging categories, and the relationships between them (Glaser 1978).

3.24 Constant Comparison

The purpose of constant comparison is to generate concepts, as opposed to descriptions … [it] changes the comparing of the highly preconceived and pre-formed produced data of science, whether qualitative or quantitative, to comparing all data that emerges (Glaser 2001, p186). Constant comparison is the process of comparing incident to incident, then incident to concept. It facilitates the identification of patterns, which can then be compared (Strauss & Corbin 1998). The process of constant comparison verifies and ensures the fit and relevance of emergent categories and theories. To achieve theoretical completeness, a Grounded Theory requires careful generation of concepts using the constant comparison method, incorporative of theoretical sampling, saturation and delimiting (Glaser 2001).
Glaser (1978) explains that Grounded Theory is based on a concept-indicator model, which entails the “constant comparing of (1) indicator to indicator, and then, when a conceptual code is generated (2) also comparing indicators to the emerging concept” (p. 62).\(^6\)

However tedious and time consuming, constant comparison requires line-by-line analysis of the data to ensure that each comparison is conceptualised. Commencing the process of constant comparison right from the start of data collection is important to avoid the risk of gathering too much descriptive data that has not been conceptualised (Glaser 2001). In the process of comparing incidents, the researcher should ask the following questions:

- What category does this indicate?
- What property of what category does this incident indicate?
- What is the participant’s main concern? (Glaser 1998, p. 140)

Constant comparison, undertaken during the data collecting process, will ultimately lead to saturation of the data, thus allowing the core category to be established. Saturation is not identifying the same pattern repeatedly in different incidents, but “the conceptualisation of comparisons of these incidents which yield different properties of the pattern, until no new properties of the pattern emerge” (Glaser 2001, p. 191). Constantly comparing allowed the main categories to be refined and for more broad consideration of the suitability of properties.

### 3.25 Sample Spreading

Following the analysis of the first four interviews, and after consultation with my academic supervisor, it was decided that a participant whose claim was of a short duration should be interviewed to test and highlight some of the properties and conditions, such as the intensity of the disempowerment and isolation. This is an important process, as it ensures that the theory development is not limited to the more lengthy claims.

\(^6\)For a diagrammatic representation, see Fig. 1 in Glaser 1978.
Sample spreading furnished some insights, including the potential for more conflict in longer claims and less correspondence in shorter claims. This led to the discarding of properties, which was an important process that ensured the theory development was not limited to specific claim durations.

3.26 Memoing

Memos are an essential part of Grounded Theory analysis, which assists the researcher to ‘mine the data‘ effectively in the construction of a theory that fits, and is relevant to the explanation of how the Basic Social Process is occurring. Memos were important at all stages of this research, serving as an encouragement for broad consideration of possible concepts that could be of explanatory value for the process under study. Many of my memos were informal, written on the return journey home following an interview, on any material available, such as the backs of ATM slips, envelopes, scraps of paper and the inside pages of books. The following is an example of a memo from this time:

She talked a lot and was patient with me. The surveillance seemed acute; it really shook her up, will others suffer as much (October 2010).

Memos are ideas write-ups about substantive codes and their theoretically coded relationships as they emerge during the time of coding, collecting and analysing data (Glaser 1998). Glaser espouses the use of memos to ‘provide the integrative binding and power to pull it all together into a grounded theory‘ (1998, p. 117). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), memos are ‘The researcher’s method of analysis of thoughts, interpretation, questions, and directions for further data collection‘ (p. 110). One such example is the following memo:

Concern regarding their futures and their reliance on their GPs for guidance and support seem crucial to their coping. Ask (1) if they have been a patient of this GP for long, or (2) how they came across them and (3) was raising the possibility of initiating their claim easy (Memo after the fourth interview, September/October 2010).
According to Glaser (1978), _The core stage in the process of generating theory, the bedrock of theory generation, its true product, is the writing of theoretical memos_ (p. 83). _The four basic goals in memoing are to theoretically develop ideas (codes), with complete freedom into a memo form that is highly sortable_ (Glaser 1978, p. 83). Memos must be recorded in order to ensure that the researcher captures all thoughts as they arise, and to enable these thoughts to be raised to a higher conceptual level, as in the following:

> Compare the level of covert surveillance with that of the other participant who experienced it, and reassess the degree of angst it caused (Memo after eighth interview, May 2011).

Memos are free and emergent; there is formalisation to them (Glaser 1998); and they lead to abstraction or ideation (Glaser 1978). Memos keep track of what is emerging (Glaser 1998). They are written and kept for later sorting throughout the process of collecting and analysing data. Memos, which can be written in any format, including paragraphs, sentences or dot points, enable the researcher to conceptualise the data as it is being collected and coded. They also provide a forum for the researcher to keep track of their own biases, and to reflect on the possibility of these biases influencing analysis of the data.

Memos can enable the researcher to separate their views and biases from the research data. They assist in theory generation as they raise the data to a conceptual level, develop the properties of each category and function to define the properties conceptually. They may be employed to present hypotheses about connections between categories and their properties, integrate these connections with clusters of other categories to generate the theory, and begin locating the emerging theory with other theories (Glaser 1978).

This memo identifies my concern regarding my interview technique, my need for greater self-confidence as well as the kindness the interviewee bestowed upon me. It also acknowledges my consideration and concern for the interviewee, while documenting my observations of the interviewee's residual suffering and the intensity of the surveillance.
The following extracts from my memos provides further evidence of how I was beginning to conceptualise the data:

Financial concerns have worried all three participants to varying degrees. Is this related to their weekly payments, a lump-sum settlement or both? (Memo after the third interview, September 2010)

(1) Did the GP suggest activating a claim? (2) Withdrawing from the process, especially when the conflict is high, along with distancing themselves from hostile situations, seems a way of self-preservation for participants (Memo after fifth interview, December 2010).

3.27 Theoretical Pacing in Writing and the Role of the Literature Review

Orthodox Grounded Theory research focuses on theory development prior to the commencement of comparing and contrasting the emergent theory with relevant literature. This helps prevent the researcher from forcing data into preconceived categories and from "delimiting", by narrowing down the reading of literature and enabling a more focused comparison.

In contrast to traditional literature reviews that involve the establishment of the context for the research, cited in Grounded Theory methodology, the emergent theory establishes the relevance of the literature, by providing guidance for the researcher to the literature that has direct comparison with the emergent theory. As this research is based on an inductive research design, it is less concerned with verification or theory testing than theory generation. Therefore, the literature review has a different function: its role is to locate the study in the existing literature.

Grounded Theory is a very suitable research methodology when there is little known about the social phenomenon being investigated, and "It is not predicated upon a well-established research base" (Courtney, Babchuk & Jha, cited in Glaser 1995, p. 791). Glaser (1998) counsels students to "open up areas where there is virtually no literature"
(p. 73), as I have attempted to do. His orthodox approach to Grounded Theory does not necessitate the use of a literature review (Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000), as would be the case with a verificational research design.

Glaser encourages the researcher to enter the field without a detailed understanding and reading of the extant literature (Glaser 1992). He favours studying the area that requires opening up, believing this provides the richest focus for Grounded Theory, and also recommends doing Grounded Theory studies in fields with sparse literature, so that ‘contributions are clear and strong’ (1992, p. 34).

My research fills a gap in the paucity of existing research into the experiences of state teachers with the WorkCover claims process. Further, this research is not concerned with strictly hypothetical–deductive procedures; therefore, the research outcomes are situated with respect to other relevant findings, including the minimal extant literature. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. In concurrence with the guidelines outlined by Glaser (1978), the following rationale is provided for use of the extant literature in a Grounded Theory study.

Glaser advises against reading in the substantive area until after the first draft has been written, at which time the researcher can begin to compare their work with that of others; only then integrating the relevant theoretical and substantive literature. However, prior to conducting the fifth interview, I was directed to some recent relevant literature, which I read and found illuminative for code development. Glaser suggests that upon reworking the draft, as much literature as possible in the area in which the theory is being written should be covered (Glaser 1978). Glaser (1978) purports that this scholarly aspect of Grounded Theory must be included: although the theory has emerged, it should ‘not be left in isolation or only for the consumption of laymen interested in the area’ (p. 139).

Literature can be compared to relevant parts of the theory, and woven in not by describing what other researchers have said, as would be found in a conventional literature review, but by a comparison to show more properties, and to give a broader view of similarities and differences. For Glaser (1978), ‘integrative placement of ideas
by supplementing, extending, and transcending others' work is the issue, not their pre-
emption of the researcher's ideas' (p. 139).

In relation to Grounded Theory methodology, there are three types of literature: (1) non-
professional, popular, and pure ethnographic descriptions, (2) professional literature
related to the substantive area under research; and, (3) professional literature that is
unrelated to the substantive area' (Glaser 1992, p. 31). Glaser's dictum in Grounded
Theory research is _There is a need not to review any of the literature in the substantive
area under study' (Glaser 1992, p. 31). This dictum is derived from the following
concern:

not to contaminate, be constrained by, inhibit, stifle or otherwise and impede
the researcher's effort to generate categories, their properties, and theoretical
codes from the data that truly fit, be relevant and work with received or
preconceived concepts that may really not fit, work or be relevant, but appear
to do so momentarily' (Glaser 1992, p. 31).

The logic guiding this dictum is clear: _Grounded Theory is for the discovery of
concepts and hypotheses, not for testing or replicating them' (Glaser 1992, p. 32). _The
license and mandate of Grounded Theory is to be free to discover in every possible
way' (Glaser 1992, p. 32). It should be free from the _daims of related literature and its
findings and assumptions in order to render the data conceptually with the best fit'
(Glaser 1992, p. 32), and _it should not surrender to the existing literature or renowned
sociologists' (Glaser 1992, p. 32).

The literature in the substantive area, may be reviewed and related to the work under
study following data collection, coding, during constant comparison of incident to
incident and incident to codes, while analysing and generating theory, and when the
theory appears adequately grounded in a core variable, leading to the emerging
integration of categories and properties (Glaser 1992). Sufficient opportunities will be
present for literature integration with the emergent theory during saturation, densifying
and sorting; thereby illuminating the emergent theory's contribution to the field (Glaser
Literature reading in the substantive area is more productive in the latter stage, due to the identification of relevancies with the emerging theory. Glaser has colloquially stated that “the researcher can skip and dip when reading, thereby gaining greater volume of coverage, since he has a clear purpose for covering this field” (1992, p. 33). Glaser (1992) reminds the researcher that reading is work and that the researcher should read for ideas “whether the ideas are in the literature or in his generating the concepts himself from the constant comparison” (p. 34).

To add another element to the role of reading literature and its use in Grounded Theory methodology, Glaser (1992) declares that “reading literature should not be forsaken at the outset of a Grounded Theory project” (p. 35). He positions the reading of unrelated literature as vital at the beginning of research due to its maximising the avoidance of “pre-empting, preconceived concepts which may easily detract from the full freedom to generate concepts that fit and are relevant when initially coding and analysing data as it is collected” (1992, p. 35). Further, theoretical sensitivity to the conceptualisation of data and to theoretical codes, which are replete in the literature, is maintained (Glaser 1992), and can stimulate theoretical sampling or a return to the field, in an attempt to locate further data relating to a gap or under-represented area of the research (Glaser 1992).

As the Grounded Theory emerges with “strength and formulation the researcher can start to switch with commensurate pace to the related literature” (Glaser 1992, p. 36). In conclusion, “Being a good author of grounded theory requires a lot of reading” (Glaser 1992, p. 37) however, “Locating his grounded theory in the literature is highly motivating to the researcher, (Glaser 1998, p. 77) and “The transcending and broader view that grounded theory gives to related literature is amazing as it integrates and puts articles into a fuller perspective” (Glaser, 1998, p. 77), and can be an on-going process as I discovered.
3.28 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to tell the story of my journey from an early stage researcher to a more knowledgeable and confident grounded theorist. It reflects upon the trials and tribulations of navigating ethics clearance procedures and the interviewing process. It displays the deviation from the Glaserian method of using un-structured interview questions in the initial interviews, to their incorporation as my confidence grew.

While I recognise that there is still much I can learn about this methodology, I believe I have established a solid foundation during this research to build upon in the future. The process of following the Grounded Theory methodology, albeit with some mistakes and reworkings along the way, has led to the development of the substantive theory of Continual Resolving: A Tight Rope Act! This is presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 4: Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!

4.1 Introduction

This chapter opens with an explanation of the core category and the Basic Social Process of _Continual Resolving_. The Basic Social Process of _Continual Resolving_ is analogous to a tight-rope circus act because there is an art to successfully negotiating the tight-rope, as there is an _art_ to successfully traversing the WorkCover claims process. One wrong step while walking the high wire could signal disaster, which has applicability to negotiating the WorkCover claims process.

There is resonance between a tight-rope act and the act of navigating the WorkCover stress claims process because each requires a balance between psychological and structural elements to complete it successfully. Like a tight-rope walker, a claimant requires a sound mind and knowledge of the structure, and the capacities to succeed in balancing the two to maintain momentum and progress towards an outcome.

As a metaphor for navigating the WorkCover stress claims process, the high wire evokes images of peril, courage, determination and a delicate balancing act to avoid dire consequences. This resonates with the injured teacher who needs these skills and others to acquire an understanding of the claims process, as well as the requisite structure, to facilitate a satisfactory claims result. Further, it conjures up images of danger, uncertainty, structural constraints, physical strength, mental strength, determination, self-reliance and coordination to produce an advantageous result.

This chapter presents the emergent Grounded Theory of _Continual Resolving: A Tight Rope-Act_! The findings of the research are presented, and these findings demonstrate how the Basic Social Process of _Continual Resolving_ is used in an attempt to conceptualise how participants resolve their main concerns with the least psychological and financial damage possible. The key purpose of the study is to identify the Basic Social Process to conceptualise and explain how participants negotiate the WorkCover claims process and resolve the issues associated with it. In this context, the Basic Social
Process used by the participants is that of _Continually Resolving_ through the employment of various strategies that enable them to progress through the WorkCover claims process.

The Grounded Theory of _Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!_ is a process model that has two main categories linked to the core category. The relationships implicit in this model are constituted by these two main categories, each comprising its own sub-categories, properties and sub-properties. Each sub-category represents a conceptual facet of significant, temporally discrete stages within the process. This Grounded Theory provides an understanding of the relationship between the two main categories, Self and Structure, as emergent from the data, and their relationship with the core category.

The main part of this chapter is focused on in-depth explanations of the main categories, sub-categories, their properties and sub-properties, with excerpts from the coded data used to illustrate 1) how these were determined, 2) how they are linked to the core category of _Continual Resolving_ and 3) to typify relevant contexts and conditions.

Although these main categories and sub-categories are addressed separately, they have close connections and sometimes overlap, and they conceptualise the participants' responses to negotiating different aspects of the claims process, such as organising alternative meeting venues. The main categories that constitute the Grounded Theory, and which were identified in Chapter 3, are Self and Structure. These two main categories are presented in Figure 1, which provides a summary of their sub-categories, properties, sub-properties and their relationship with the core category.

A diagrammatic representation of each sub-category, its properties and sub-properties is presented at the beginning of each section, with the explication of the theory following.
Figure 1: The Grounded Theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’
4.2 The Main Category of Self

Figure 2: The Main Category of Self, its Sub-Categories, Properties and its Sub-Properties
The main category of Self, as presented in Figure 2, is comprised of the following sub-categories:

1) Resisting Self-Stripping, its five properties and its six sub-properties
2) Protective Self-Maintaining, its five properties and its four sub-properties
3) Constantly Legitimating, its two properties and its four sub-properties
4) Experiencing Alienation, its six properties and its nine sub-properties.

4.2.1 The Sub-Category of Resisting Self-Stripping

The first sub-category, Resisting Self-Stripping, as presented in Figure 3, explicates the deleterious effects the claims process has on participant's sense of self, its associated

Figure 3: The Sub-Category of Resisting Self-Stripping, its Properties and its Sub-Properties

The first sub-category, Resisting Self-Stripping, as presented in Figure 3, explicates the deleterious effects the claims process has on participant's sense of self, its associated
manifestations and the refashioning of the self that it necessitated. It provides an understanding of the relationships within the category, and describes strategies employed to assist the claimants to reduce or manage the level of ‘Self-Stripping’ they experienced while navigating the claims process, via strategies of resistance.

Self-Stripping is conceptualised as a negative response engendered by the process, whereby the participant experiences detrimental psychological and personality changes. Self-Stripping conceptualises the outcome of participants’ experiences of the claims process as a hostile process. It explains how participants respond to legislatively imposed procedures, the lack of clarity around legislated compensation, and the social stigma associated with Workers’ Compensation stress claims. These negative psychological consequences are demonstrated by Sandy’s statement:

Oh I must say that one of the symptoms was that was that I couldn’t face the daylight. I could only go out walking at night, I didn’t want people to see me, I felt terribly guilty that I was a failure that I couldn’t face anymore, and that I was reduced to being on WorkCover and having to justify this to people.

Participants felt that negotiating the claims process resulted in Self-Stripping. The process was experienced as being imbued with psychological, social, professional and financial losses, which generated deleterious self-perceptions, necessitating a reshaping of the self. The sub-properties within this sub-category illuminate how resisting was necessary to reduce self-stripping and identify the strategies employed to reduce the effect of self-stripping.

### 4.2.2 Properties and Sub-Properties of Resisting Self-Stripping

The properties of Resisting Self-Stripping are the following:

1) Living with Loss of Future
2) Living with Loss of Self-Esteem
3) Living with Loss of Value and Recognition
4) Living with Loss of Income
5) Living with Loss of Lifestyle.
Each property has a range of sub-properties, which will be explicated in this section.

4.2.2.1 The First Property

The first property of Self-Stripping is Living with Loss of Future, which, to varying degrees, necessitated the refashioning of a participant’s future. There was concern from participants regarding the sense of losing their future due to being WorkCover stress claimants. They felt that their future was being stripped away, and to deal with this they had to reconceptualise and refashion their future, which was a confronting prospect. They perceived that the claims process limited their future options regarding employment, career and lifestyle, and that uncertainty prevailed:

My wife and I have had to reconsider our plans, our future, our retirement together (Ewan).

I had plans, I’m still in my forties and I’ve had to talk with my parents about my future (Wanda).

The sub-property of Living with Loss of Future concerns a claim’s length and the degree of Self-Stripping that it engendered. The duration, to some degree, was a determinant to the depth of loss that was felt: the shorter the claim, the less loss of future was felt. A shorter claim was perceived by participants as being less restrictive, and the possibility of ‘controlling’ the refashioning of their future was perceived to be greater. Claims of less than one year’s duration attracted less sense of loss, as was enunciated by Fay whose claim met this category: ‘At a certain point, I felt that I was ready to return to work’. This contrasts with claims of longer duration, which attracted a greater sense of loss and entailed a greater reconception of the future, as expressed by Wanda:

The longer I was on WorkCover the less employment options I felt I had. I thought I’d never work full-time again.
4.2.2.2 The Second Property

The second property of Resisting Self-Stripping reflects the level of psychological attention deemed necessary to deal with the loss of self-esteem. The self-stripping associated with losing self-esteem was mediated by the outcomes of decision making. Participants experienced the process as having a negative influence on their levels of self-esteem. Their self-esteem oscillated depending upon which phase of the process they were in, and the decisions associated with particular stages. The phase that their claim was in was regarded as a regulatory factor to their level of self-stripping. This is enunciated by the following:

I didn’t want people to see me (Sandy).

I lost a year behind a bedroom door (Lyn).

I just wanted to stay at home. I had a rule that I was to rest whenever I felt like it, because as a teacher you can’t rest. The other thing is that I had insomnia, I had insomnia for a long time (Bea).

The first sub-property of Living with Loss of Self-Esteem, concerns to varying degrees, the duration of a claim. In concurrence with loss of future, a claim’s length determined the degree of a claimant’s loss of self-esteem, the psychological effects that it had and the associated level of psychological attention it demanded. In this sample, a claim of seven months or less appeared to attract a lower degree of loss of self-esteem than a claim of longer duration. A claimant’s level of self-esteem was noticeably different upon reaching the 12-month mark of a claim. At this stage, the Victorian Education Department is no longer required to _top-up_ the claimant’s weekly payments to maintain their pre-injury weekly salary, in adherence with the state teachers’ enterprise bargaining agreement. The combination of psychological and financial loss precipitated a perceptible decrease in the claimant’s self-esteem, contributing to self-stripping and the reappraisal of their sense of self.

The second sub-property of Living with Loss of Self-Esteem identifies certain stages in the process as being factorial to the degree of loss of self-esteem, and the participant’s
associated ability to deal with it. The initial claims lodgement produced high self-esteem loss, whereas the concluding stage of a claim was associated with lower loss of self-esteem. A reduction in the intensity of self-stripping regulated the psychological attention necessary to cope with it, as can be deduced from Fay’s quotation:

I knew I had to make a claim, but the thought depressed me. After talking with my husband, I knew it had to be done … Nearing the end of my claim, I felt that I had made the right decision and that the burden was lifted.

Amy was more forthright when saying:

I was low when I made my claim and angry throughout most of it … taking legal action gave me a focus and made me determined to win.

Where there was hostility, or an adversarial situation associated with a stage in the claims process, such as a court appearance or facing a hostile insurance company-employed professional, there was greater loss of self-esteem, compounded by the sense of being ‘stripped’ of a strong sense of self.

4.2.2.3 The Third Property

The third property of Resisting Self-Stripping is Living with the Loss of Value and Recognition. This is an outcome of being disengaged from the Victorian state education system, and more specifically, the participant’s last school worksite. Loss of value and recognition are psychological manifestations requiring differing degrees of psychological adjustment for participants. This was expressed as feelings of being de-valued and undervalued, resulting from having their contribution to public education recognised inadequately. For some participants, the psychological adjustment needed to cope with this sense of de-valuation was overwhelming. The WorkCover system was not incorporative enough of demonstrating gratitude or acknowledgement of the participant’s contributions. This was dispiriting for participants, intensifying self-stripping, as exemplified by Jack’s comment:

I’ve been deprived of a sense of contribution and achievement that is central to why people teach, they certainly don’t do it for the money.
Lyn commented:

I had contributed a lot to that school and education. I was the\textsuperscript{7} ... coordinator and I had received\textsuperscript{8} ... scholarship but that didn't seem to account for much, it was all about not embarrassing the school and saving money, and I was a burden and they wanted me to get me off the books [meaning to stop her claim].

The first sub-property of Living with Loss of Value and Recognition reflects how participants perceived their level of contribution and value, both to the school and education. A perception of a high degree of contribution initiated a greater sense of loss and de-valuing, in turn intensifying the degree self-stripping and the need for psychological adjustment.

The second sub-property of Living with Loss of Value and Recognition is related to the length of time participants had been employed by the Victorian Education Department. The longer participants had been employed by the Victorian Education Department, either in schools or at other associated sites, the more loss and grief they felt. A higher the level of self-stripping was also experienced, as illustrated by Jack's comment: 'I was invited to a dinner at Crown casino for 40 years' service by the Education Department, but I declined to attend'.

\textit{4.2.2.4 The Fourth Property}

The fourth property of Self-Stripping is Living with Loss of Income, which pertains to participants' belief that the WorkCover claims process deprived them of a satisfactory income. Being a claimant resulted in income reduction. This was associated with immediate and future financial hardship for the participants, and necessitated a reassessment in their concept of self:

A WorkCover claim was insufficient to compensate me for the last years of my teaching career, when I was at the peak of my earning capacity. I feel I've been deprived (Jack).

\textsuperscript{7} Deleted to protect anonymity.
\textsuperscript{8} Deleted to protect anonymity.
I had a large house and I had to scale down, and I became reliant on my sister and brother-in-law for financial support (Sandy).

I didn’t realise that this would impact upon my superannuation (Ewan).

I knew that I would suffer a reduction in pay and my parents were very generous in helping me with my mortgage (Wanda).

My husband and I had planned to buy a house and we had to re-look at our finances, and we postponed buying until I was back at work (Fay).

We had to borrow money to pay for our daughter’s graduation, and I had to ask our local member of parliament for financial assistance (Lyn).

The sub-property of Living with Loss of Income is concerned with the duration of the claim, which was the identifiable variable within this sub-category. The Victorian WorkCover Authority weekly payment system is statutorily imposed. Payments are determined as a percentage of a claimant’s pre-injury average weekly earnings, with reductions after specific periods. The longer the claim, the more financial hardship the claimant experienced, and the greater the amount of self-stripping that ensued.

4.2.2.5 The Fifth Property

The fifth property is Living with Loss of Lifestyle, which represents the change in lifestyle precipitated by being a claimant. Living with Loss of Lifestyle is contextualised psychologically, physically and materially. Each component precipitated degrees of self-stripping by the claimants in their attempts to adjust to changed circumstances, as illustrated by the following:

I’ll never truly be able to do the things that I did before, socially and intellectually that is … I’ll probably be on medication for the rest of my life, and I still see a psychologist (Sandy).
When I was claiming I stopped a lot of exercising and I've never returned to it fully … I had to reduce my outgoings, and I still have to watch my money (Wanda).

We’ve had to change our lifestyle, and the things that we were planning to do in our retirement, we can’t (Ewan).

The first sub-property of Living with Loss of Lifestyle was determined by the degree of the injury. The more severe the injury, the more debilitating it was; this tended to lead to a more restrictive lifestyle, or a greater degree of loss of lifestyle, and a greater level of associated self-stripping.

The second sub-property of Living with Loss of Lifestyle concerns participants’ personal financial circumstances. It reflects the material effects of being a claimant on participants’ lifestyle in relation to material changes and the adjustments that each participant had to make to incorporate changed financial circumstances and to negotiate their sense of self.

The properties and sub-properties identified within this sub-category affected both the claims process and the claimant’s financial circumstances. This sub-category exposed the necessary psychological adjustments needed by participants to deal with each consequence in an attempt to reduce self-stripping, and the inequities imposed by the power and resource differentials operating within the claims process.
4.2.3 The Sub-Category of Protective Self-Maintaining

The second sub-category, as presented in Figure 4, is Protective Self-Maintaining, which contains the following five properties:

1) Support Identification
2) Support Selection
3) Coping with a Socio-Psychological Relationship
4) Balancing Legal Consequences
5) Managing with Inadequate Compensation.

These are adumbrated with their sub-properties in the following section.
The sub-category of Protective Self-Maintaining refers to the maintaining of the self. It identifies positive and adaptive strategies that participants adopted to assist progression through the claims process, in an attempt to maintain a healthy sense of self. It is also known as Protecting Self, which relates to behaviours designed to protect one’s self.

This concept was derived from various focused psychological, material, financial and emotional supports identified by participants as being significant in furthering their ‘successful’ progression throughout the WorkCover stress claims process. Protective self-maintenance conceptualises behaviours that mitigate the harmful effects of self-stripping. Protective Self-Maintaining is processual and operationalised at different stages, on different levels and to differing degrees throughout the claims process. Engaging in Protective Self-Maintaining necessitated identification of potential supporters and negotiation with supporters to resolve tensions within the process. Protective Self-Maintaining was also necessary to counteract perceptions of inequalities in power and resources, which are outcomes of self-stripping, and are evident in the structural categories.

4.2.4 Properties and Sub-Properties of Protective Self-Maintaining

4.2.4.1 The First Property

The first property of Protective Self-Maintaining is the identification of the type of support needed by participants, including resources, without which navigating the claims process would have been more difficult. Participants perceived that in order to have a ‘successful’ outcome, support was essential, and participants often sought this prior to the initial claims lodgement, as in the following examples:

I initially spoke to my GP about making a WorkCover claim to see if she would support me with it (Fay).

I had spoken to my GP previously regarding stress, but this time I asked him directly about claiming, and did he think it was a good idea, luckily he did. He was a compassionate person and I was lucky to have found him (Wanda).
Fortunately, I had known the GP for some time and he remained the same kind of person that he is. He was prepared to give me as much info as he could, and be supportive, and spend as much time as was necessary with me. I believe I had the best service from him possible (Bea).

Support identified included partners, family members, colleagues, the AEU, lawyers, medical professional, politicians and other WorkCover claimants. The strategy employed in the identification of this support was initially undertaken independently by participants, then via recommendations.

The first sub-property of Support Identification was that of dealing with time constraints when making the identification. Participants with the luxury of more time available for the identification process could identify which support was necessary more thoroughly, whereas participants with less time available made less identifications, therefore limiting their chance of enhanced protective self-maintenance. The quotations below demonstrate this point:

I knew that I had to make a quick decision regarding who could initially help me, and as my partner was a teacher, he could help me. It was between Christmas and New Year, and I had three weeks to make a decision. The AEU was virtually closed, and I had to use whoever was there (Wanda).

My wife was the only one who really understood what I was going through, and I couldn't have done it without her (Ewan).

The second sub-property of Support Identification reflects the level of knowledge the claimant had about the claims process. A low level of knowledge and understanding translated to a low level of identification of support. This was due to the claimant not fully understanding what was involved with the process. A high level of knowledge allowed greater identification of support sources, which contributed to a higher level of self-maintenance.
4.2.4.2 The Second Property

The second property of Protective Self-Maintaining was Support Selection. This property refers to how and why participants selected their support at different stages of the claims process. A process of rationalisation with the underlying concept of protective self-preservation prevailed, which was significant to the concept of self-maintaining.

The first sub-property of Support Selection concerns mobilising knowledge by the participant and assessing the level of knowledge the prospective supporter had about them. This usually led to the selection of a person or people who knew the claimant well, who had a personal relationship with them and who could be relied upon for unconditional support, such as a loved one, an extended family member or a close friend. This person would not only have knowledge about the participant, but would also have to be willing to be active in the participant’s Protective Self-Maintaining, as illustrated by the following comments:

My husband was my main support, it helped that he was a teacher and knew a little about Work Cover (Lyn).

My husband gives advice when I ask for it (Fay).

My boyfriend was there for me at the beginning until he left me, then it was a struggle (Wanda).

The second sub-property of Support Selection was based on the amount of time the support person or people had available to allocate to supporting the claimant. The claimants had the perception that supporting would be time consuming, and that their requirements would vary at different stages throughout the claims process. The support could be needed at any time, and a high intensity of support may be required. Therefore, the support person or people would need to be able to accommodate this, and if necessary, they must be willing to take a pro-active role in the participant’s Protective Self-Maintenance.
The third sub-property of Support Selection relates to assessing the level of knowledge held by a potential support person about the claims process. At different stages in the process, a differing degree of knowledge pertaining to specific aspects of the process was required. Participants considered this when making their selection, as in the examples below:

I contacted my local state member of parliament to seek financial assistance and advice (Lyn).

Amy also sought support from her local state parliamentarian:

I often spoke to my local member about changing parts of the Act, and requesting assistance with understanding the Act.

The fourth sub-property of Support Selection deals with integrating support into the claims process and operationalising it at different stages and with different intensity when required. The claimants perceived it necessary to have an understanding regarding the appropriate level of support needed at the appropriate times, to attempt adherence to the advice offered to them by their supporters. It was also important for participants to recognise when support was not needed, which was also an important aspect that is applicable to self-maintaining and to the mitigation of self-stripping.

Wanda declared:

Once my boyfriend left, me I relied heavily on the Australian Education Union and trusted them when they said it was an appropriate time to seek legal advice.

Ewan said:

When my wife was having difficulty with the insurance company correspondence, she decided to contact our own solicitor and seek independent advice, which helped moving to the next phase of the process.
4.2.4.3 **The Third Property**

The third property of Protective Self-Maintaining pertains to Coping with a Socio-Psychological Relationship. The pervasive feeling by the claimants was that a claim required societal legitimation, and that there was societal pressure for them to legitimise their claim. Managing this pressure demanded a high level of activation of Protective Self-Maintenance to mitigate self-stripping.

The sub-property of Coping with a Socio-Psychological Relationship concerns the perception by the claimants that workplace stress, as a psychological injury, appeared to need more legitimation than a physical injury, because it was considered ‘invisible’. The claimants experienced angst in resolving the dissonance between their psyche and societal expectations. Attempting to resolve this dissonance triggered the need for a high level of self-maintenance to prevent a negative effect on the sense of one’s self.

Wanda explained:

> It started as soon as I lodged my claim, well actually before that, when I was considering it. People seemed to judge me and then ignore it, or it wasn’t brought up again … At each meeting or medical consultation I felt compelled to justify my injury and why I should be on WorkCover. I found myself justifying it to strangers or to people that I’d just met, perhaps I was paranoid.

Lyn stated:

> But the general society doesn’t take to it too well, it’s not an acceptable illness, breaking a leg is an acceptable illness, stress still isn’t talked about.

Bea declared:

> There is such a stigma attached to injured workers, and such a preparedness on behalf of the media not to explore the issues, and it’s so stigmatised, that people immediately conclude that whenever they meet someone on WorkCover that they have to be a fraud.
The fourth property of Protective Self-Maintaining centres upon balancing legal consequences constituted within the policy, their effects upon a claimant and the self-maintenance required to mitigate these effects. Legal and monetary penalties may be imposed upon a claimant if the Victorian WorkCover Authority deems that a breach by a claimant has occurred. This placed enormous pressure on the claimants, it was perceived as intimidatory and threatening, and was met with resentment. Legal consequences imposed on the claimant may range from a reduction to weekly payments to the cessation of a claim. Legal consequences were viewed by the claimants as a form of control. They were regarded as a method of enforcing compliance, subduing claimants and making certain that legal obligations were met. The following quotation by Lyn displays her attempts to overcome intimidation and cope with threats:

I handed in a certificate of capacity two days late, it was the first time I was late, and they wanted to stop payments until I really complained, and they reversed their decision.

Amy stated:

A lot of correspondence from the insurance company contained the legal consequences that could be incurred if I failed to comply, which I considered intimidating.

The sub-property of Balancing Legal Consequences pertains to the availability of resources and support to the claimants, and to claimants maintaining financial control to avert legal consequences and to assist with legal undertakings. Potential legally imposed consequences could be averted or postponed, depending on the claimant’s access to resources and support. This could also be applied to the time and availability of resources necessary to self-maintain actively. The availability of finance to seek legal representation or to access legal advice affected a claimant’s ability to challenge legally constituted sanctions, which they perceived as disadvantageous.
Wanda expressed this as follows:

It wasn't fair that they, the insurance company, was going to terminate my claim. I was distressed about it and didn't like when they informed me of it, because it was early January and the AEU was closed or had limited personnel available to help, so I was really worried about getting help.

Sandy said:

I couldn’t have gone all the way to the\textsuperscript{9} … court without my sister's legal expertise, nor her financial backing.

Ewan said:

We looked into getting our own lawyer to help, I think we had one meeting with him, but it was going to be too expensive, so we left it with the union's lawyers.

4.2.4.5 The Fifth Property

The fifth property of Protective Self-Maintaining concerns coping with being inadequately compensated for a workplace injury. The lack of adequate compensation for the claimants resulted in difficulty making ends meet. Claimants were unsatisfied with their amount of compensation; it failed to compensate them adequately for their workplace injury and for their contribution to state education. This was dispiriting for them, as illustrated by the following:

It was insufficient to compensate me for the last few years of my teaching career, when I was at the peak of my earning capacity. I feel that I’ve been deprived of that (Jack).

I’ve sent in medical bills up to 15 times and they haven't been honoured. So I’ve had to stop my treatment. One of my treating professionals refuses to bill them, as she’s had too much grief with them. I’m now in six months arrears.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{9} Removed to protect anonymity.}
I’m three-thousand dollars in debt, and I haven’t been able to access any other medical professionals because I can’t afford to (Lyn).

The sub-property of Managing with Inadequate Compensation contextualises the level of dissatisfaction being relational to the duration of a claim, and the level of injury a claimant sustained. Coping with and resolving this dissatisfaction was difficult for the claimants, and in some cases, it failed to be resolved. Wanda remarked:

I was initially happy with my lump-sum payout, but after a year or more I reflected on it, and it really wasn't enough, considering that I’m not earning much of an income now. I feel bitter about it.

Managing with Inadequate Compensation relates to the amount of compensation gained, as determined by the level of resources and support accessible to the claimant. This reiterates the importance of sound Support Identification, as outlined in the second property of this sub-category. A satisfactory amount of compensation was gained primarily due to the amount of finance the participant had access to in the pursuit of compensation. This reinforces the significance of the resource imbalance operating throughout the claims process and the structural difficulties participants had in reversing it, as outlined by Sandy in the main category of Protective Self-Stripping.

Amy stated:

I couldn’t take my case to the next higher Court because I was psychologically exhausted, and I didn’t have the finances to fight it, so I let it go.

Protective Self-Maintenance can be equated with self-preservation, whereupon a claimant required varying amounts and types of support to _survive_ the claims process. It required a perceptive support person or people, with the ability to judge when and where support was required.
4.2.5 The Sub-Category of Constantly Legitimating

The third sub-category, as presented in Figure 5, is Constantly Legitimating. This encompasses 1) the property of Dealing with WorkCover Employee Legitimation and its sub-properties, Dealing with Legitimation, Dealing with Claim Duration, Coping with Resource Availability and Dealing with Legal Legitimation, and 2) the property of Dealing with Medical Professional Legitimation and its sub-property, Dealing with Claim Duration. This sub-category of Constantly Legitimating conceptualises various ways in which a claimant constantly felt compelled to justify their claim to give it legitimacy. The act of legitimating may also have occurred prior to the lodgement of a claim, for example, when discussing the potentiality of lodging of a claim with a partner, friend, colleague or school principal.
The effects of Constantly Legitimating on the research participants included feeling humiliated, harried and demeaned. Participants felt that constant legitimating was necessary at every stage of the process, and this had varying psychological consequences. Participants felt pressure to validate their claim with WorkCover personnel and society in general. Participants attempted to resolve this psychological conflict using strategies such as consulting their personal psychologist or psychiatrist, or instituting legal action, depending on the financial resources to which they had access. Constantly legitimating was a stressful and anxiety-producing obligation, which engendered secondary stress, as outlined by Robyn:

Going to the insurance company psychiatrists caused anxiety and distress.

**4.2.6 Properties and Sub-Properties of Constantly Legitimating**

**4.2.6.1 The First Property**

The first property of Constantly Legitimating pertains to the need for legitimation with non-medical WorkCover employed personnel or their agents. This could range from a claims-manager, a supervising claims-manager or a claims rehabilitation case-manager. There was the perception of having to justify the need for such things as retraining services or enrolment in a course; medical services, such as physiotherapy; the need to hold mandated meetings in open spaces, in a non-threatening environment; or the inclusion of a support person, such as having a husband present.

Lyn said:

Whenever I had to attend meetings with someone from the insurance company I requested that they were to be held in open spaces, or with doors open with not a lot of people or noise around, and that my husband had to be present.

Sandy expressed:

I had seen a short course that I thought would be a way for me to get out of teaching. I asked WorkCover if I could do this ten week course and I was given approval, and I went and did it, which was good. It was good it got me
away from that whole terrible nightmare of what was going on at my normal
work and then assessments for WorkCover came up, and I went at that
particular time to about ten psychiatrists. The case-manager rang and said that
it was about time that I was going back to work. I explained that I was going
to this course and that there was pressure from the school, they wanted me
back before … but the course I was doing at TAFE didn’t finish until … and I
contacted the AEU, and said that they wanted me at school or at another
school, but that never happened, but I said I really want to finish this course,
there's only … weeks to go, and with the union's support with phone calls to
and fro, and my psychologist was involved, I suppose I was allowed to finish
the course.

Bea stated:

I wanted to take a friend in to the meeting with me, but they wouldn’t let me.

The first sub-property of the need for constant legitimating with WorkCover personnel
identifies the duration of a claim as a variable in its intensity and the amount of
legitimation required. A shorter claim, such as one of six months' duration, was
associated with the need for less legitimation than a longer claim. A lower level of
pressure to legitimate associated with a shorter claim made dealing with constant
legitimating and the associated self-stripping more tolerable.

Wanda expressed:

As my case lingered on, I had more justification to do, and not just with legal
professionals, but socially, because people thought that I looked so good that I
was well. My GP advised me to stay fit and active, and I can't help it that I've
got good genes.

The second sub-property of the need for constant legitimating concerns the availability
of and access to resources for the claimant to assist with this imposed legitimation.
Resources in the form of money, equipment, technology or transportation were needed
to justify a claim and render dealing with constant legitimation easier.
Wanda exclaimed:

Every time I had to be medically assessed, which was usually in the city, I had to request transportation costs in writing, and I never knew if I would be reimbursed.

The third sub-property for the need to constantly legitimate pertains to the need for legitimization during the legal parts of the process. The claim required substantiating at different stages of the legal process, including the initial interview with a prospective legal firm to establish the merits of the case, appearances at the compulsory Accident Compensation Conciliation Service, meetings with the plaintiffs’ barrister and court appearances.

Wanda stated:

Appearing at the conciliation meeting was nerve-wracking, as I knew that it could determine the future of my claim, plus, I had to face an ex-colleague and I didn't know how she would react. I let my union rep do most of the talking and all the negotiation. We got a satisfactory outcome, but it was difficult being criticised, judged, and justifying my claim.

4.2.6.2 The Second Property

The second property of Constantly Legitimating is the role played by the need for legitimating a claim with medical professionals: a claimant’s personal ones, their legal team’s ones and the insurance company’s ones. At every stage of the process, where the claimant interacted with a medical professional, they perceived the need to legitimate their claim. Examples of this included the first stage of activating the claim with their GP, undergoing the first psychological medical assessment with the insurance company’s psychiatrist and the final stage of their legitimation in the Magistrate’s Court. Each of these legitimating events was anxiety producing due to the claimants’ feeling of being judged, and dealing with this contributed to the lowering of their self-esteem.
The sub-property of the need for Constantly Legitimating a claim with medical professionals reflects the duration of a claim’s length, which affected both the amount and frequency of legitimation required. A longer claim resulted in the requirement for more medical consultations and assessments, thereby precipitating an increase in legitimation. This was due to the number of medical assessors encountered, combined with a higher frequency of assessments. A longer claim may include legitimating before a medical panel, before an insurance company’s assessing psychiatrists or at consultations with a claimant’s legal defence team. All of these assessments generated the need of some level of self-maintenance.

Lyn commented:

I was required to see many psychiatrists, and I had to appear before a medical panel to have my claim assessed, which was trying for me.

This section has outlined the pressure participants felt to constantly legitimate their claim throughout various stages of the claims process, with different personnel and to varying degrees. It identified varying psychological effects engendered by the pressure to constantly legitimate, and outlined the strategies employed in attempting to circumvent these effects.
4.2.7 The Sub-Category of Experiencing Alienation

The sub-category of Experiencing Alienation is constituted by six properties and their sub-properties. The first property is Managing Hostile Professionals, and its sub-properties are Managing with the Number of Hostile Professionals and Managing Hostility Mitigation. The second property is Managing Social Isolation, and its sub-property is Dealing with Claim Duration. The third property is Managing Clarification, and its sub-properties are Managing with Resource and Support Level and Managing with Discontinuity. The fourth property is Managing Inefficient Administration, and its...
sub-property is Maintaining Personal Records. The fifth property is Managing with Lack of Resources, and its sub-property is Coping with Access to Resources. The sixth property is Managing with Lack of Understanding and Knowledge, and its sub-properties are Managing with Support Level, Managing with Claim Length and Managing with Access to Resources.

This sub-category pertains to the psychological and social alienation experienced by the participants in association with traversing the claims process. Participants viewed the process as exclusionary, devoid of instituting a sense of belonging, incompatible with their needs and causing estrangement from the process and from themselves. Alienation was experienced in direct relation to the process, as well as in relation to the interaction in the claimant’s relationships, with people such as family, friends, colleagues and society. This alienation caused much angst and frustration, and elements of loss of self, such as loss of confidence and self-esteem. The strategies devised by participants in an attempt to cope with this alienation are articulated in the following section.

4.2.8 Properties and Sub-Properties of Experiencing Alienation

4.2.8.1 The First Property

The first property concerns dealing with hostile professionals and the feelings of alienation generated by this hostility. Dealing with hostile professionals not only caused self-stripping (as described in the sub-category of Resisting Self-Stripping), but also caused alienation and a sense of estrangement from the claims process. Hostile professionals included school principals, colleagues, medical assessors and Victorian WorkCover Authority lawyers. The hostility was discomforting and could arise from a misunderstanding, a time delay or a claimant’s feeling of lack of inclusion in decision making. This hostility caused claimants to devise strategies, such as complaining to the hostile professional, or discussing it with their personal psychologist or psychiatrist in an attempt to mitigate the hostility. However, participants felt powerless and/or psychologically ill-equipped to confront this hostility, as in Rose’s example:
I’d had an unpleasant experience with one insurance company psychiatrist so my own psychologist came with me to the next assessment. She was not allowed into the assessment.

The first sub-property of Managing Hostile Professionals is that the degree of alienation experienced by the claimants was exacerbated by the number of hostile professionals encountered. The more hostile professionals encountered, the greater the sense of alienation. The protracted nature of a claim was also associated with more hostility, primarily due to the increased number of professionals with whom a claimant had to interact.

Wanda said:

Perhaps it was because that I was more compliant at the beginning of my claim, and more polite, and the insurance company’s psych’s seemed friendlier, but by the end my sessions with them were difficult.

In relation to a hostile assessing medical professional, Wanda exclaimed:

I felt unease from the moment I met him. I hadn’t been in the room long when I felt the friction growing, then he said that if I wouldn’t cooperate I could leave. I said that if I left, my benefit was at risk, and then we continued.

Lyn felt a great deal of hostility from the insurance company’s assessing psychiatrist and from the insurance company's personnel. She recounted:

All other [insurance company] psych’s allowed my husband to sit in on the assessments but not this one. He insisted that my husband leave the room … I had one guy who was really rude to me and I said to him, you don’t have to speak to me that way, that’s really rude, and it causes me distress, and he said no bad deed ever goes unpunished. Some don’t treat you as human; he was from the insurance company. So I hung up straight away. Some people think you are weak, or you’re trying to play the system.

The second sub-property, Managing Hostile Professionals, concerns ways to mitigate hostility and foster a less alienating claims process. The claimants would have liked the
professionals to have a more profound knowledge of their case in order to lessen or avert misunderstandings by professionals. The claimants felt that this knowledge should have been more particularised, rather than being viewed as just another case by professionals. The claimants felt that they were not viewed as individuals; for example, participants’ considered that formulaic medical assessments were being undertaken, with the outcome being tailored to the insurance company’s needs. This, they felt, was lacking in objectivity, as in Jack’s experience:

I had to, of course, go to what they call an independent medical examination by a psychiatrist, and he was quite a reasonable kind of bloke, and when I read his report I felt um, that he was seriously coming from the employers point of view.

Amy declared:

The medical assessment was unsatisfactory. I was told to complete a form with standard questions that tried to pigeon hole me, then the psych didn’t spend much time with me, and I felt that didn’t get across what I needed to.

4.2.8.2 The Second Property

The second property is Managing Social Isolation, which pertains to the feelings of isolation experienced by participants, which also contributed to a negative sense of self. Isolation was felt due to participants being alienated from other WorkCover stress claimants, partners, family, friends, colleagues and society. Isolation was experienced as a condition of becoming alienated from the claims process combined with the social stigma associated with being a WorkCover stress claimant. This isolation was experienced to differing degrees, depending on the short or long-term nature of the claim.

The sub-property of feeling isolated concerns the duration of a claim, which was a defining feature in the intensity and frequency of the extent of the isolation felt. A short-term claim was associated with lower feelings of isolation, as opposed to a longer-term claim, where feelings of isolation were experienced for an extended period, at a more acute level and with negative effects on the psyche.
Wanda declared:

I really began to feel socially isolated, and became fairly lonely, because I wasn’t interacting with many people, and the longer my claim went the more isolating it was, and I wondered if I would ever work again.

Fay stated:

The process caused me a lot of anxiety and worry, I pulled away from one colleague who was showing an interest. I felt that I was being judged, and I couldn’t cope with the criticism and lack of understanding; I felt myself becoming isolated. Not knowing my future also caused me worry.

4.2.8.3 The Third Property

The third property of Experiencing Alienation relates to coping with clarification, which is conceptualised as necessary to achieve a satisfactory claims resolution. Clarification occurred at all stages of the claims process, from the initial lodgement of the claim, to accessing a lump-sum settlement after court proceedings. The constant need for clarification was marginalising for the claimants. It provoked feelings of inadequacy, confusion and resentment. The need for clarification generated a sense of the claims process as being alien, negatively affecting the claimant's self-identity, making the clarification process unpleasant.

Clarifying strategies operated in an attempt to ensure participants had correct information; to traverse the claims process, to retain some control over the claims environment and to redress the power and knowledge imbalance experienced as operating in the claims process. The focus of clarifying strategies was on methods to meet participants’ needs, such as the provision of explanations, information and clarification around requirements and obligations, which would provide a more equitable level of knowledge within the claims structure. Participants assumed the importance of issues of fairness and equity, and attempted to address some of these issues.
The first sub-property of Managing Clarification focuses on the variables support and resources, which were significant for the provision of clarification, and contributed towards a reduction in the level of alienation from the process. Varying degrees of support and resources, which had to be sourced by the claimant, were required at most stages of the process and in response to the length of a claim.

Wanda declared:

My telephone bill increased as my claim went on, and I'm sure the AEU and my claims managers and case managers were tired of my constant phone calls asking for explanations about issues.

The second sub-property of Managing Clarification reflects the difficulties encountered in dealing with the discontinuity inherent within the claims process by the claimants. Discontinuity is considered a property of Managing Clarification because it was perceived as a contributory factor to the sense of alienation felt by participants. Discontinuity caused confusion and a sense of being peripheral to the decision-making process. A claimant could have numerous claims managers and case managers throughout the duration of their claim, which was problematic because it affected the continuity of the claim and contributed to secondary stress. For example, a claimant had to inform each new case or claims manager about their claims history, or they had to retell specific incidents that may have been distressing for them and precipitated anxiety. There was a higher degree of discontinuity present in claims of longer duration. This discontinuity was primarily caused by a higher turnover of professionals, especially in relation to claims-managers and case-managers.

Wanda stated:

I had many claims and case-managers, they would come and go and I would have to explain my case again and again, and I wondered if they were really listening. It was sad when I was given a new case-manager because I liked her, and I felt that she understood me and we had been together for over a year. All the case-managers were young and fairly inexperienced.
Lyn commented:

There was such a high turnover of staff, I couldn't keep up with it and this was disconcerting. Um, the insurance company had difficulty retaining staff.

Rose stated:

There were seven changes of principal throughout my claim; I gave up trying to explain my case to them.

4.2.8.4 The Fourth Property

The fourth property of Experiencing Alienation concerns inefficient administration. The administrative system was experienced as lax, and contained many mistakes requiring a great deal of resolving for the participant. Documents were misplaced, lost, delivered to the wrong claimant or medical professional, or failed to be received. If a claim was long term, more inefficiency was encountered, leading to a higher level of dissatisfaction and confusion for the claimants.

Lyn said:

Your files go missing. I've had medical records go missing. I've had medical records ending up, in fact, my best one at the time was that they mailed me two documents and two other people's medical files, which I rang my treating practitioner about it straight away and asked what do I do, because I've ended up with two other people's medical files in this envelope. He got them, I dropped them straight off at his office. He informed WorkCover that he'd ended up with two other people’s medical files in with mine. He was sorry that I'd ended up with two other people’s files in with mine, and he returned them by courier straight away, because he said that it was an administrative breach.

Ewan explained:

Documents would arrive without dates, or I would receive two copies of the one form, like with trying to get reimbursement for transport. Documents would be misplaced and things would take longer to resolve.
Bea stated:

I sent in the receipts in a registered letter and it didn’t arrive, and when I followed it up through Australia Post they said that it hadn’t been collected, and I was told that this was quite common. So in the end I resorted to contacting WorkCover and somebody by the name [name suppressed to protect anonymity], a woman, helped me, and Australia Post returned that letter to me, and I took it in to the insurance company.

The sub-property of Managing Inefficient Administration was the perceived need to maintain copies of personal records by the claimant to minimise the feelings of marginalisation. It was considered necessary to maintain good records and to make copies of records to circumvent loss, misrepresentation and misunderstanding; however, this became burdensome for the claimants.

Lyn announced:

Again, you have to become an expert record keeper, my pre-teenage daughter filed or tried to get everything together. You can’t send in originals because they lose originals and fax is vital, because they lose originals and that way you can keep track of what you’ve sent in. Keep account of what you’ve sent in. The claims managers change, they don’t take things with them, files don’t get passed on.

Also:

You can’t send in the originals, they lose them. You get subjected to petty things as well. I sent my in a day late to my school, so they cut off my pay for a fortnight, to the extent that I wrote to a government minister because I had no access to petty cash in the school hols. They do have leeway, but they chose not to use it (September/October 2010).

4.2.8.5 The Fifth Property

The fifth property of Experiencing Alienation concerns the lack of resources and the effect on the progression of a claim. The imbalance in resources, as perceived by the claimants, was conceptualised as disadvantageous, disempowering, inequitable and pervasive. It was experienced as restricting the claimant’s ability to resolve conflict and
obtain a satisfactory resolution to their claim. The claimants were reliant upon the resources to which they or their supporters had access; this was instrumental in decision making regarding the level of a claim’s progression.

The sub-property of Managing with Lack of Resources centres upon material factors such as money and equipment, and the immaterial factor, time, which are influential factors in the development of strategies pursuing claim progression and outcomes.

Sandy declared:

The only way that I took my claim to the Supreme Court was with the financial and legal help of my sister, who is a lawyer, as is her husband. The hearing cost over $100,000, so without their support, for which I’ll always be in debt, I wouldn’t be where I am now. My life would be much different.

4.2.8.6 The Sixth Property

The sixth property pertains to the lack of understanding and lack of knowledge of the claims process by the claimants, and its role in contributing to their marginalisation. Lacking an understanding of the claims process functioned to marginalise the claimant, thereby reinforcing its mystique, prohibiting claimants from fully engaging with it, and reducing the ability to devise tactics to circumvent its effects.

Fay stated:

It was a steep learning curve, I spent many hours reading the Act trying to come to terms with it.

Bea declared:

I think we’re so ignorant, and we don’t understand what’s going on.

The first sub-property concerns the level of support required in the attainment of an understanding of the process in the aim of mitigating the perceived inherent power and knowledge imbalance. Having access to personnel who were knowledgeable or who had experience with the process contributed to a better understanding of the process for
participants, which reduced the alienation associated with it. Key personnel included the AEU officials or a WorkCover barrister.

The level of support required was considered particularly important in relation to understanding and resolving legal matters.

Sandy declared:
Well, my sister attended to all legal matters, because I don’t have a legal brain and she tried to keep me informed as to what was happening and what was to happen next, but I tuned off as it was too complex, and left it to her.

Bea commented:
I joined two support groups, one in the east and one in the city. I was going to accept a decision by the insurance company, but I was advised to appeal the decision. I didn’t know my legal rights at that stage.

The second sub-property, Managing with Lack of Understanding and Lack of Knowledge, identifies the higher degree of knowledge needed by the claimants when the duration of a claim was long. The longer the claim, the more procedures a claimant needed to be cognisant of, thereupon making alienation seem more acute. As outlined in the sub-category of Protective Self-Maintaining, quality Support Selection was significant to obtaining a satisfactory claims result, as it was to mitigating the sense of alienation experience by the claimants.

The third sub-property reflects access to resources and their availability, which are factorial in the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the claims process and mitigating the sense of alienation from it. Resources, such as access to the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s library in Melbourne or the use of a laptop computer, were regarded as useful to gaining this understanding.

Wanda said:
In the early stages I went into the TAC library and read whatever I could, but it became too time consuming so I stopped. The staff were very helpful there,
and once, one staff member found a specific article for me, which I thought was considerate.

Other resources may have been in the guise of money to consult lawyers, or in equipment needed to access information pertaining to an outcome of a settled claim.

Wanda remarked:

I could only pursue my claim through the Courts with the help of the AEU. I had heard that it could cost up to nine-thousand dollars a day to appear in court.

Experiencing Alienation is an influential main category, and its sub-categories contain interrelated concepts and constructs that reflect the high levels of frustration among participants regarding the need for clarification, a better understanding of the claims process and more transparency in the claims process. This main category has allowed the identification of the deleterious psychological effects experienced by the claimants, which are associated with navigating the claims process. It has allowed elaboration of the sense of disengagement experienced among participants from the claims process. Experiencing Alienation has conceptualised the disillusionment experienced by the claimants regarding decision making about them by others, including medical professionals and insurance company personnel.

This section has presented the four sub-categories of Resisting Self-Stripping, Protective Self-Maintaining, Constantly Legitimating and Experiencing Alienation to show how the interplay between them, their properties and sub-properties, as constructed from the data, enabled the main category of Self to be developed. This section has also demonstrated the relationship between the sub-categories and the core category.
4.3 The Main Category of Structure

![Diagram of the Main Category of Structure](image)

**Main-Category Structure**

- **Sub-Category One**
  - Dealing with Bureaucracy
  - Properties
    - 1. Coping with Time-lines
    - 2. Surviving Surveillance
    - 3. Negotiating Terminology
    - 4. Dealing with Corresponding
    - 5. Dealing with Lack of Transparency and Accountability
  - Sub-Properties
    - 1. Dealing with Unrealistic Time-Lines
    - 2. Dealing with Surveillance Degree
    - 3. Grappling with Jargon
    - 4. Dealing with Degree of Jargon
    - 5. Identifying Support Level
    - 6. Dealing with Fixed Time-Lines
    - 7. Lack of Resources
    - 8. Dealing with Different Levels of Transparency and Accountability

- **Sub-Category Two**
  - Confronting Structural Rigidity
  - Property
    - Confronting a Hierarchical structure
    - Sub-Properties
      - 1. Dealing with Structural Positioning
      - 2. Dealing with Functional Restrictiveness

- **Sub-Category Three**
  - Coping with Lack of Structural Understanding
  - Properties
    - 1. Coping with Lack of Legislative and Legal Understanding
    - 2. Dealing with Constituent Parts
  - Sub-Properties
    - 1. Support Selection
    - 2. Confronting Lack of Resources
    - 3. Support Selection
    - 4. Confronting Lack of Resources

**Figure 7: The Main Category of Structure, its Properties and its Sub-Properties**
The main category of Structure, as presented in Figure 7, pertains to participants' perceptions of the oppressive nature of the claims process and the role that the WorkCover structure played in it. The WorkCover structure and its associated inequalities were experienced as oppressive and pervasive. This was experienced via different mechanisms, to varying degrees of duration, and at different levels of intensity. The WorkCover structure is conceptualised as causing distress and having hierarchical elements. It is used as a means of control, maintaining a power imbalance and marginalising the claimant in the process. Participants devised strategies in the attempt to cope with structural inequalities, through constant negotiation, which was made difficult due to the adversarial nature of the dispute resolution process.

Amy stated:

amendments to sections of the Act and changes to administrative procedures within the WorkCover process would be useful to reducing structural inequalities.

This main category comprises three sub-categories: 1) Dealing with Bureaucracy its five properties and eight sub-properties; 2) Confronting Structural Rigidity, its property and two sub-properties and 3) Coping with Lack of Structural Understanding, its two properties and four sub-properties. This section will provide an explication of each of these sub-categories, their properties and sub-properties.
4.3.1 The Sub-Category of Dealing with Bureaucracy

The first sub-category of Structure, as presented in Figure 8, is Dealing with Bureaucracy, which was perceived as pervasive, problematic and restrictive to the claim progress. This sub-category comprises the first property, Confronting Time-Lines and its sub-property, Dealing with Unrealistic Time-Lines; the second property, Surviving Surveillance, and its sub-property, Coping with Surveillance Degree; the third property, Negotiating Terminology, and its sub-properties, Grappling with Jargon and Dealing with Degree of Jargon; the fourth property, Dealing with Corresponding, and its sub-properties, Identifying Support Level, Dealing with Fixed Time-Lines and Confronting Lack of Resources; and the fifth property, Confronting Lack of Transparency and Accountability, and its sub-properties, Dealing with different degrees of Transparency and Accountability.
The claims bureaucracy is a mechanism designed by the State of Victoria to implement the WorkCover claims process in a way to maintain its privileged position. The claims process was experienced by the claimants as overly bureaucratic, causing frustration, anger and misunderstandings. It demanded rigid adherence and was seen as a control mechanism and as an avenue for the exercise of power.

Bureaucracy was perceived as being operationalised at all stages of the process, stringently enforced by the insurance company and the Victorian WorkCover Authority. Dealing with the process entailed devising strategies that would not hinder the progression of a claim or cause undue psychological harm. Participants believed that little variance was tolerated in bureaucratic procedures due to the legislation governing the process. Legislation was perceived as a factor that influenced decisions made by personnel such as treating health professionals or rehabilitation case-managers. Bureaucracy was experienced as an impediment to expeditious results and progression through the claims process, as described by Lyn:

Bureaucracy, don’t get me started. My husband has a phrase that his year nines on a bad day could run it better than anyone else. The insurance company has difficulty keeping and training staff. It's the same with WorkCover, they don’t run it well. What they can do is change the bureaucracy, so that it does run efficiently, and treat their own workers better, so that their own workers stay, because if their own turnover of workers is anything to go by, they don’t stay; and that indicates poor employment practices.

Wanda declared:

Whenever I requested something like enrolling in a short course, it always had to be checked by the case-manager’s supervisor or someone else.

4.3.1.1 The First Property

The first property of Dealing with Bureaucracy pertains to the time-lines associated with bureaucratic procedures. These bureaucratic and structurally imposed time-lines were
experienced by participants as inflexible, precipitating confusion and worry; and were perceived as being weighted against them. Ewan commented:

Nothing ever seemed simple, my wife told me that there were many levels of bureaucracy, and that’s why it was taking so long, was frustrating for us.

The sub-property of coping with the structurally and legislatively imposed time-lines pertains to their unrealistic nature. Participants felt distress at having to respond to time-lines that they considered unnecessary and unrealistic. The legal penalties associated with not adhering to time-lines were considered intimidating. Adhering to these time-lines reinforced the significance of the strategies of Support Selection, access to resources and the availability of time.

Robyn commented:

I was given three days’ notice to reply and I didn’t know what to do.

4.3.1.2 The Second Property

The second property of Dealing with Bureaucracy is Surviving Surveillance. Claimants were conscious that the claims process entailed elements of overt and covert surveillance, which they found disconcerting and unnecessary. Surveillance occurred in different guises, in different structures, at differing stages of a claim and with different degrees of intensity and duration. Methods of surveillance included authorised, expected and unexpected telephone calls; expected and unexpected mail deliveries; pre-arranged and non-pre-arranged home visits from WorkCover personnel; and the monitoring of physical movements through practices, including being followed.

Dealing with these aspects of surveillance entailed negotiating with whoever was responsible for the surveillance or their representative, for example, a school principal or a Magistrates Court’s magistrate. In some cases, it extended to initiating legal action. The level and success of the negotiation was viewed as dependent upon the level of resources available to the claimant. Surveillance was experienced by claimants as a method of power exerted over them. It was embedded in a culture of bureaucracy that was considered by participants as both controlling and intimidatory.
The sub-property of surveillance relates to the degree of surveillance used, primarily by the insurance companies. Surveillance varied according to the duration of the claim, and could be highly or loosely structured. Surveillance was required to operate in adherence with the appropriate legislation. Failure to adhere to this legislation could result in legal challenges, rendering the surveillance methods illegal and the subsequent information gathered inadmissible. This could result in causing bureaucratic delays, thereby prolonging the duration of a claim’s outcome. The longer the claim, the more intense the surveillance: it was used more frequently, and its methods were more varied and structured, compounding the insecurity felt by participants.

Sandy explained:

At my\(^{10}\) … court hearing we discovered that I had been under surveillance. I had been followed going to\(^{11}\) … and they tried to discredit me by saying that if I was unwell, I couldn’t have done this. They also had evidence that I went\(^{12}\) … and, that this meant that I was well. I was horrified.

4.3.1.3 The Third Property

The third property of Dealing with Bureaucracy is Negotiating Terminology. Participants experienced difficulty interpreting documents due to the legal terminology they contained. The jargon represented a power imbalance because it limited practical understanding of elements of the process by the participant, adding more complexity to the bureaucratic process. Certain tactics were required to counteract this. Jargon contributed to the participants’ perception that a knowledge imbalance operated and added to the oppressiveness of the claims process. The legal terminology was repetitive, formulaic and impersonal, which contributed to participants’ confusion and diminished their understanding of the process.

The first sub-property, Negotiating Terminology, refers to grappling with jargon and information, which was made more difficult if the claimants’ supporters’

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\(^{10}\) Place name removed to protect anonymity.  
\(^{11}\) Place name removed to protect anonymity.  
\(^{12}\) Place name removed to protect anonymity.
comprehension of it was also low. There was a nexus between claim progression and supporters' comprehension of documents and information. Low comprehension negatively affected the progression of a claim.

Ewan said:

It was no good me reading all the correspondence, I couldn't understand it, my wife did all that. She ended up buying a copy of the Act, which is huge, to help her comprehend it all.

Fay commented on the frustration she felt by the lack of a personalised approach to her correspondence:

The language used is fairly technical, and it takes me a while to understand it. I found it generic, like someone rolls them off a machine.

The second sub-property, Negotiating Terminology, refers to the prolific amount of jargon that was included in documents and in other forms of communication. This engendered feelings of frustration and degrees of powerlessness in the participants. The longer the duration of a claim, the more prolific and complicated the jargon appeared, contributing to time delays and a greater need for interpretative and emotional support.

Wanda claimed:

Maybe it was because I was distressed when reading letters from the insurance company, and that's why found it difficult to interpret, but I needed assistance comprehending the legal terminology when those letters started arriving. I usually rang my rep at the union.

4.3.1.4 The Fourth Property

The fourth property of Dealing with Bureaucracy relates to dealing with paperwork and the overwhelming amount of correspondence received by the claimants, which was considered part of the oppressiveness inherent within the WorkCover structure. Much correspondence was deemed unnecessary, and was associated with restrictive and inadequate response time-lines. Correspondence was generated by different personnel
associated with the claims process; however, most was generated by the insurance companies.

The claimants had the expectation that all correspondence would be replied to expeditiously to alleviate worry and provide clarification; however, this did not always occur. Claimants associated time delays with negative decisions and outcomes, which was unsettling for them. Responding to correspondence was considered time consuming, but relevant to bureaucratic processes and significant to the Continual Resolving process.

The first sub-property of Dealing with Corresponding relates to the level of support needed by participants to attend to and understand correspondence. There was a perception that there needed to be commensurate support available to deal with the correspondence generated. The more complex the correspondence, the more and higher quality support was required to comprehend and deal with it. This placed pressure upon both the claimant and their supporter/s. Having access to knowledgeable personnel contributed to better comprehension. Key personnel with this comprehension included AEU officials and a barrister experienced with WorkCover claims.

For Ewan:

My wife dealt with all correspondence, she had two huge folders containing all the correspondence from the insurance company and the Education department.

For Jack:

a lot of work had to be done, it’s not a process that just happens without you doing anything. You know I’ve got two thick folders of correspondence stuff that I’ve written up and records of interviews, all that sort of thing.

Lacking an understanding of what was contained within the correspondence was marginalising for the participants. This lack placed them at a disadvantage regarding bureaucratic procedures, which reduced their ability to engage fully with the claims process. Fay stated:
It was a steep learning curve, I spent many hours reading the Act to come to terms with it.

Bea declared:
I think we're so ignorant and we don't understand what's going on.

Wanda expressed:
As I was by myself, understanding the initial correspondence was usually very difficult, and often it would take some time to work it out, or I’d phone my union rep to help … I was lucky that I had a barrister who was experienced with stress claims, and he really worked hard for me. I didn't know what to expect and just followed his advice.

The second sub-property of Dealing with Corresponding identifies the structurally imposed and bureaucratically implemented fixed nature of time-lines imposed upon the claimants to address the correspondence, a property also identified in the first sub-category of Dealing with Bureaucracy. This was regarded with suspicion by the claimants, and viewed as an unnecessary level of bureaucracy. Received correspondence had fixed reply time-lines; in concurrence with the Act, failure to adhere to these could incur legal penalties. Unrealistic time-lines contributed to the pressure the claimants felt in negotiating the claims process. For them, it acted as a regimented control function and method for creating oppression.

Wanda stated:
According to the letter, I had three weeks to appeal the decision that had been made, which was unreasonable, because most places were closed over Christmas and the New Year, and I became distressed about it.

In relation to receipts, Bea exclaimed:
I had to keep receipts, which I did. I had to send them in on a timely basis.

The third sub-property of Dealing with Corresponding reflects the financial and material resources necessary to complete the perceived overly bureaucratic generated
correspondence. Items such as mobile telephones, laptop computers, fax machines and transportation were necessary, to varying degrees, to assist with dealing with correspondence at different stages of the process. This expenditure contributed to the financial hardship for participants. It demonstrates the effect that the resource imbalance had on coping with correspondence, and its effect on resolving a claim.

For Sandy:
I’m a pretty low-tech person, but I did buy a mobile phone just to be available if someone needed me.

Lyn remarked:
My husband and I bought a fax machine, which was necessary to handle the correspondence.

Jack declared:
with the help of the union I was able to get support with the correspondence, I’ve got two big files written up … I had the support of the union and I think those things made it an easier process.

4.3.1.5 The Fifth Property

The fifth property of Dealing with Bureaucracy concerns the lack of transparency and accountability in the claims process. Decision making, which was instrumental to claim progression, was perceived by participants as lacking transparency and accountability. This contributed to participants feeling that they were unable to gain full comprehension of the claims process. The claims structure failed to incorporate mechanisms for addressing this problem, rendering strategies to combat it problematic.

The sub-property inherent in this property relates to the perception of differing degrees of accountability and transparency operating throughout the claims process. Participants perceived an imbalance in the application of accountability by WorkCover officials. They also observed a lack of structural oversight in the claims process to monitor accountability. Accountability would have allowed greater transparency of the process,
thereby facilitating the development of different strategies by participants to counteract the accountability differential.

Participants felt they constantly had to account for their behaviour, a feeling that was also identified in the third sub-category of the main category of the Self. Conversely, WorkCover personnel did not have this same sense of accountability, which precipitated feelings of unfairness, resentment and inequality. Claimants had expectations that the claims structure would allow more transparency regarding decision-making processes in relation to their claim. They considered that more transparency would initiate greater accountability for those making decisions, which could have applicability to the redressing of the perceived accountability imbalance. However, this expectation failed to materialise, which caused aggrievement for the claimants.

Fay stated:

I had a lot of uncertainty with the process, no-one seemed to be able to give me a straight answer, especially about the future. I felt that there were so many different parts to this, and that they were all doing their own thing, that each person or part wasn’t connected to the other, it was confusing.

I tried many times to get a clear answer to what would happen in the future if I found a job either in or out of teaching. No-one could tell me, they said not to worry about it, just worry about now, but I needed to know. I needed some assurance as to what I could expect, I asked many times, I was brushed off.

I could never get a straight answer from the claims-manager nor anyone in the Education Department. Either they didn’t know or they were keeping things from me. It was frustrating and I tried to get answers from the union.

Amy stated:

I found my local MP helpful sometimes when looking for answers to questions the claims-manager was trying to dodge, or couldn’t provide an answer to, telling me who was ultimately responsible for a decision made about me.
This section has comprehensively covered the properties and sub-properties of Dealing with Bureaucracy, illustrating how bureaucracy was operationalised within the claims structure and contributed to the perpetuation of oppression, as experienced by participants; and the difficulty that was encountered implementing strategies to counteract it.

4.3.2 The Sub-Category of Confronting Structural Rigidity

The second sub-category, as presented in Figure 9, is Confronting Structural Rigidity. This sub-category comprises the property Confronting a Hierarchical Structure and its sub-properties, Dealing with Structural Positioning and Dealing with Functional Restrictiveness. These properties and sub-properties will be outlined in this section, as will the relationships between them. In the participants' experience, the structural rigidity of the claims process reduced participants' ability to traverse it expeditiously, and strategies were developed by participants to circumvent it. The claimants experienced structural rigidity as an impediment to a claim’s stage progression, which was perceived as a disadvantage. Structural rigidity was perceived as mutable, if the political power was there to initiate change.
4.3.2.1 The Property

The property of this sub-category is Confronting a Hierarchical Structure. It concentrates on the rigidity encompassed within the hierarchical structure, and demonstrates the participants’ attempts at minimisation to avert it. It displays the claimants’ tactics for reducing the perceived power differential between them and WorkCover personnel.

The WorkCover claims structure is made up of constituent parts, which are situated within a hierarchy, as constituted by the *Accident Compensation Act 1985*. The structure could be rendered less rigid by reconstituting it through a parliamentary change to the Act; however, this would require political will, resulting in a change of power relations, thereby enacting structural repositioning, to the detriment of some. Participants felt that this hierarchical structure restricted vertical progression, prevented lateral movement and discouraged creative ways of resolving problems. Further, rigid adherence to the structure by claimants was ensured through legislatively imposed requirements, which were experienced as impeding claim progression.

To achieve progress in a claim, the claimant had to observe the processual nature of the structure by passing through each stage methodically. Examples of this included the claimant having to consult an insurance company assessing psychiatrist, after having consulted their own psychiatrist, before their claim could be accepted, or having to consult a GP every 28 days to have their certificate of capacity reissued, rather than being able to have it reissued for a longer duration. This seemed time consuming and unnecessarily bureaucratic for the claimants.

Wanda declared:

I had to attend a meeting at the conciliation panel, which was intimidating, before I could receive a form stating that I could proceed with legal action.
Lyn stated:

My rehab case-manager had to get permission from her manager, who had to get permission from the insurance company, before I could attend a specific medical professional. My condition deteriorated while waiting for it.

The first sub-property of Confronting a Hierarchical Structure concerns its positioning nature. Each part of the structure has a position within the WorkCover hierarchy, and is constituted to perform specific functions. The State of Victoria is positioned at the top of the claims hierarchy, with the claimants at the bottom. The claimants experienced their positioning within the hierarchy as restraining their claim’s progression, as limiting their movement within the structure, and as preventing a full exploration of the claims process.

Each constituent part of the structure had legislatively enforceable obligations and responsibilities. According to the claimants, their personal obligations and responsibilities appeared more onerous and disproportionate than the obligations of those further up in the hierarchy, which precipitated feelings of inequality. Participants felt that the hierarchical structure privileged those at the top, while disadvantaging those at the bottom (themselves). This compounded feelings of a power imbalance, and contributed to the claimant’s sense of being less significant. Rose commented in relation to the insurance company:

They were at the top and I was at the bottom, and I felt compelled to do what they said.

Participants felt that this structure was designed to implement a structural-functional relationship that maintained a power imbalance and was disadvantaging for them.

The second sub-property of Confronting a Hierarchical Structure concerns its functional restrictiveness. Participants perceived that each constitutive part functioned to achieve specific outcomes, which reduced open and clear communication. There was a sense, by participants, that this promoted a *fait accompli*, that the structure was constituted to process claims in a formulaic way, restrict flexibility within it, dissuade irregularities
from occurring and prevent bureaucrats from having to deal with unforeseen contingences.

Ewan commented:

I wanted to request a change of scene, but to do this it had to go through different levels of bureaucracy, and I was told that it wasn't usually allowed, that the process couldn't accommodate it.

Fay made the following observation regarding the Act:

Didn't allow for anything unusual to be requested, and when she wanted to submit a document to a specific person, she was informed that that person couldn't accept it at this stage in the process.

The sub-category Confronting Structural Rigidity has explained the role of hierarchy in maintaining the power imbalance within the claims structure and the associated impediments that it engendered, as perceived by participants.
4.3.3 The Sub-Category of Coping with Lack of Structural Understanding

Figure 10: The Sub-Category of Coping with Lack of Structural Understanding, its Properties and its Sub-Properties

The third sub-category, as presented in Figure 10, is Coping with Lack of Structural Understanding. It consists of the properties 1) Coping with Lack of Legislative and Legal Understanding, and its sub-properties Support Selection and Confronting Lack of Resources; and 2) Coping with Constituent Parts, and its sub-properties Support Selection and Confronting Lack of Resources. Both properties contain the same sub-properties.

This sub-category refers to the lack of understanding by the claimants regarding the various elements of the claims structure, how they functioned and how they were constituted. The lack of understanding and knowledge was experienced as disadvantageous for the claimants, and subsequent tactics were designed to assist in the mitigation of this disadvantage. The consequences of failing to resolve this lack of knowledge are also outlined.
4.3.3.1 The First Property

The first property of Coping with Lack of Structural Understanding pertains to the legislation governing the claims process and the legal process available to all claimants, (as opposed to the psychological effects engendered by the legal consequences outlined in the sub-category of Protective Self-Maintaining, in the main category of Self). Participants’ knowledge of the legislation governing WorkCover was either non-existent, minimal, or in one case, at a reasonable level. Claimants’ knowledge about the legislation and the legal process available to them increased as their claim progressed. However, most remained ignorant about aspects of legislation and the legal process, usually due to their complexity, prescriptiveness and inaccessibility. Subsequently, claimants adopted the strategy of letting others deal with this on their behalf. Certain procedures within particular structures could be beneficial to reducing delays, addressing confusion of time and place, lodging a claim earlier and reducing payment delays.

The first sub-property of Coping with Lack of Structural Understanding relates to claimants selecting the right support to improve their comprehension of the complex legislation and legal structure, in the hope of providing a better outcome for their claim. Comprehensive legal representation was considered valuable for coping with the claims process, and participants selected this support with consideration to the resources available to them. It was also necessary to identify the stage in the claims process when legal expertise was no longer important. The identification of the appropriate level of legal support varied throughout the claims process, and was useful for self-maintenance and a reduction in self-stripping.

Rose commented:

The legal firm the union sent me to were most helpful, especially considering the length of my case. I was really impressed with the legal secretary I had.

The support person or people selected needed to be knowledgeable of some (if not all) aspects of the legislation and legal process to help guide the participant through elements of each. Wanda recalled:
I didn't know what to expect at the hearing. I had rely on my union-appointed lawyer and their secretary, who gave me a lot of support and kept me informed as to what was happening, because the process was really complex.

Amy stated:

Get yourself a copy of the Act, and find a lawyer who’s prepared to work through it like I did.

The second sub-property relates to the resources accessible to the participant, such as money and equipment, which could play a role for the participants in securing an understanding of the legislation and the legal structure. Resources were considered factorial to facilitating this understanding, and to providing a fuller understanding of the structural components in the claims process, which allowed for better comprehension of the role that the legislation and the legal structure played in the progression of a claim.

At some stage of the process, all participants had to deal with contingencies, such as reductions to their weekly earnings, covering medical expenses or attending to correspondence. This required money, time and equipment; thus, access to resources to cover contingencies and legal expenses was paramount.

Sandy stated:

I was fortunate to have the financial and legal help of my sister, who is a lawyer, as is her husband, and they were prepared to back me, which went over the $100,000 mark. I'll always be grateful to them.

4.3.3.2 The Second Property

The second property focuses on the constituent parts in the WorkCover structure and procedural elements within them, such as payment procedures, settlement procedures and the appeals process. Constituent parts included the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service, the insurance company, the rehabilitation company, the appeals process and the Medical Assessment Panel, and each developed its own structure to
perform its legislatively constituted functions. Claimants experienced difficulty establishing strategies to gain a sound comprehension of each of the constituent parts, often due to the constituent parts’ complexity, the claimants’ mental health at the time or the lack of available time to do this.

Amy said:

The Act doesn’t allow much flexibility in the WorkCover structure, so no matter what I asked for, it had to fit in with the structure, which I found frustrating.

The first sub-property, Support Selection, is concerned with acquiring support to gain more knowledge about the structure of the constituent parts. Participants sought edification from personnel, such as school principals, AEU officials and politicians, to improve their understanding of the constituent parts’ structure and role.

Wanda stated:

I had no idea what the conciliation panel was, nor what to expect. I was sent a DVD and brochure describing its function, process and explaining who would be there.

The second sub-property pertains to the acquisition of resources needed to gain an understanding of how and why the constituent parts functioned in specific ways. The claimants wanted an understanding of how specific procedures and consequences were implemented to mitigate their perceived disadvantageous effects. Limited access to resources impeded this understanding.

Rose commented:

I would have liked to have known what was going on more, but my time and resources only stretched so far. My case was a very long one.

This sub-category has identified the claimants’ lack of structural understanding and the strategies perceived as necessary to circumvent this lack of understanding. The same
sub-properties applied to both properties, as constructed from the data, reiterating the interconnections within this sub-category.

This section identified the need for the participants to be continually resolving within the main category of Structure to precipitate an efficacious resolution to their claim. In all three sub-categories, it was necessary for participants to employ different strategies, to enable degrees of resolving. The employment of these strategies was necessary to procure satisfactory outcomes for the claimants, and is dependent on factors including access to resources and the realignment of the power imbalance.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the Grounded Theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’ It has clearly articulated the theory that the claims process is disadvantaging for the claimants and that constant resolving of conflict by them is necessary to reach an outcome. It has provided an account of how participants experienced and responded to the structural aspects of the claims process. It has also provided an understanding of the interrelationships between the two main categories of Self and Structure, their relationships to the core category and their components, which articulated the disadvantaging aspects of the claims process for participants. The main categories are not mutually exclusive; they have the greatest explanatory power and link all of the categories (Etkins, cited in Glaser 1995). Examples of this include the interrelationships between the sub-categories of Dealing with Bureaucracy and Experiencing Alienation, and those in the elements of the Basic Social Process and the BSPP within each category. Further, the strategy of ‘Continual Resolving‘ has been employed as a way to conceptualise how participants engaged with and negotiated the claims process. The results of this Grounded Theory are discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 5: Literature Comparison and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In adhering to the tenets of Orthodox Grounded Theory, the intention of this chapter is to present a comparative literature review to situate the emergent theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’ within the extant literature. Comparisons, contrasts, similarities and differences are identified from a multidisciplinary base using theorists such as Foucault, Habermas, Honneth and Weber. The literature has been selected based on its perceived relevance (Guthrie 2000) and the contribution it can make to the theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’

This chapter explicates my theory that imbalances in the claims process, that communication in the claims process and that access to accurate knowledge and resources were instrumental in shaping the power imbalance experienced by participants in the WorkCover stress claims process. This power imbalance functioned to disenfranchise, alienate and marginalise claimants, while operating to perpetuate the functional requirements of the WorkCover system (Pusey 1987). Constant resolving of problems associated with these issues, by claimants, was necessary to enact a claims outcome.

5.2 The Purpose of the Literature Comparison

As an extensive explanation of the role of the literature review in Grounded Theory has been provided in Chapter 3, this chapter will provide a brief re-encapsulation of its main principles.

The literature search should commence following the identification of the Basic Social Process. Reading in related substantive areas is encouraged throughout the research to facilitate theoretical sensitivity (Glaser 1998). The literature comparison is not used for theory verification; it is used to situate research findings and fill in the gaps in the field of this substantive area.
To this end the extant literature conceptualising how Victorian state school teachers experience the WorkCover stress claims process is compared and contrasted with the emergent theory of ‘Continual Resolving’ to situate the findings of this research as relevant to the extant literature and the emergent theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’ This will supplement the understandings as elucidated in this research of how Victorian state school teachers experience the Victorian WorkCover process.

There have been few stand-alone qualitative studies in Australia into the substantive field of WorkCover stress claims. One exception is Otto (1982; 1983; 1986), who included a section on state school teachers’ experiences of the Victorian WorkCover claims process in a general study of teacher stress in Victorian state schools. In addition, Wearing et al. (1990) also included a relevant section in their study on teacher stress in Victoria. The outcomes of my research represent a substantive contribution to the knowledge on Victorian state school teachers’ experiences in navigating the Victorian WorkCover stress claims process.

My research fills a gap in the existing literature by using qualitative research methods to explore participants’ experiences in different stages of the claims process. It exposes the causes and effects of the dissatisfaction of injured teachers with the claims process. The emergent theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’ adds to the knowledge base on aspects of Australian Workers’ Compensation schemes, primarily in relation to the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s claims process. It does this by documenting the complexity of traversing this process for the Victorian state teacher stress claimants.

This literature comparison has been limited to literature addressing the Australian experience, as I chose literature that is directly comparable to the experiences of Victorian state school teachers. The issues raised by the participants in this research have guided my selection of literature. Thus, via the iterative process of memoing, I established a focus on the issues identified in the main categories, such as power imbalance, disillusionment and isolation.

More generally, the literature on workplace stress, teacher stress, Workers’ Compensation schemes and public policy is highly relevant to the emergent theory of
Therefore, I turn to the literature discussing the meaning of stress and teacher stress, and refer to the limited research completed on the experiences of Victorian state school teachers, and their experience of the Victorian WorkCover stress claims process. The literature is supplemented with other studies by Ezzy, Walter and Welch (2009), Kenny (1982; 1983; 1986) and Roberts-Yates (2004), all of whom provide useful insights into the experiences of injured workers during the claims process.

The chapter commences with an examination of theories on stress, and discusses their relevance or lack of relevance to the understanding of stress as appropriate to this thesis. It then adumbrates the five areas of concern that have been selected for this literature comparison based on their perceived relevance to the emergent theory. They are:

1) Psychological and social effects of occupational stress
2) Bureaucracy
3) Power and resource imbalance
4) Surveillance
5) Communication and lack of knowledge

The chapter concludes with an explanation of how these five areas of concern relate to the Grounded Theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’

5.3 Theories of Occupational Stress

Although the WorkCover policy and the decision-making processes can be considered as premised on aspects of the following theories of occupational stress, the position presented here is that the social perspective is more useful because of the limitations of other positions as discussed in the following sections.

The experiences of the teacher participants in relation to issues including contemplating lodging a stress claim, navigating the stress claims process and attempting to resolve conflict, as conceptualized in the emergent Grounded Theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-rope Act!’ can be situated in relation to several of the theories of occupational stress as briefly outlined below. However, it is argued that the sociological perspective provides the most appropriate interpretive framework because it provides an
understanding of the role that wider social forces play in shaping the experiences of claimants in relation to a specific public policy.

The first three sections show that psychological theories of stress have little relevance for understanding the experience by participants in this research as they negotiate the claims process for the reasons outlined below.

5.3.1 Psychological Theories

Firstly, a problem with psychological theories of occupational stress is related to their predilection for apportioning blame to victims. Thus interventions proceed in a linear fashion in an attempt to ‘change the performance of the latest scapegoat’ (Kenny et al. 2000, p. 17). This is a view also shared by Alschuler et al. (1980, cited in Munt 2007), who more specifically acknowledge the profusion of ‘victim-blaming’ therapeutic ‘discourses’ directed at individual teachers. Smithwick (1999, cited in Munt 2007), admonishes the approach to stress management described as ‘If all else fails a visit or three to a psychologist … is recommended to help you gain the –skill” necessary to decrease your vulnerability to breakdown’ (p. 9).

Teacher stress was typically framed within this victim blaming paradigm in the research data I collected, and was frequently recognized and referred to by participants. Such responses evidently contributed to the secondary stress associated with the claims process, and is conceptualized in the sub-category of Self-Stripping. Smithwick (cited in Munt 2007) criticises approaches that exhort the stressed individual to self-cure through diet, exercise and lifestyle regimes, as if it were:

a very simple business really … which involves regularly spending time doing balancing activities such as rest, recreation, social interaction, exercise, good diet, problem solving activities, talking things out, humour and of course sex/affection (p. 9).

Similarly, problems arise from the predominance of the medical model as a paradigm for understanding the causes of occupational stress and illness (Quinlan & Bohle 1991, cited in Kenny; Quinlan & Johnstone 1993). This paradigm focuses upon individuals
rather than groups, on treatment rather than prevention and on technical intervention rather than environmental change. The medical model has been extremely influential in controlling both the way in which occupational injuries and illnesses have been defined and the means by which they are diagnosed' (Kenny et al. 2000, p. 17).

The main criticism of the medical model is that it is premised on treating injured or sick workers rather than on the production of healthy working environments (Biggins 1986) as has been elucidated by Ashkanasy (2005). This approach perpetuates understandings of workplace injuries as _accidents_ that are non-preventable. Thus, the placement of the locus of blame is on the individual worker for the injury or the hazardous nature of the work (Ferguson 1998).

The disciplines of industrial, health and occupational psychology have adopted a managerialist model of occupational stress, which aligns closely with the medical model (Kenny et al. 2007). These disciplines focus on the characteristics and behaviours of individual workers and _avoid addressing the role that the structure of power and authority in industry play in occupational well-being_ (Bohle 1993, p. 92). Ashkanasy’s (2005) research which is situated at the micro level, and focused upon the role that emotions play in work, fits this model. He asserts that _emotions and moods can lead to the formation of more long-term attitudes reflected in low job satisfaction_ (p.19). Ashkanasy's (2005) work fails to address the social context in which stress is interpreted in his research and which is a crucial element of the emergent Grounded Theory of _Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act_!

This shortcoming is addressed in the main category of Structure, where participants had difficulties coping with a hierarchical structure. The relationship between high and low work demands and poor working conditions on psychological and physiological stress responses in workers has been documented (Clegg & Wall 1990). The effect of these disciplines has predominantly been assessed in relation to individual’s attitudes and behaviour, rather than in relation to workplace structure and labour organisation (Quinlan 1988, cited in Kenny 1998) meaning that the research makes a minimal theoretical contribution to my research.
Foucault (1977) offers a valuable critique of the psychological theories model as discussed in this section. He asserts that these psycho-therapeutic solutions rely on the ‘norm’ as their point of reference. They also function as systems of discipline that individualise the patient by the features, the measurements, the gaps, the marks that characterise him [sic] and make him [sic] a ‘case’ (p. 102). Others suggest that these models have blamed the job, the equipment, the worker and management (see for example, Cooper 1995; Kenny 1995; Habeck 1993; and Quinlan 1988).

5.3.2 Personality and Stress

Personality has been accepted as a major mediator of stress reactivity, premised on recognition that sensitivity to stressors varies between individuals. For example, different responses to ego threats have been related to personality differences (Eysenck 1988). Most theories of occupational functioning acknowledge that personality is highly contributive to performance and well-being, while suggesting that the relationships between personality and environmental factors are ‘complex and dynamic’ (Kenny et al. 2000, p. 17). Despite the view that personality characteristics are intrinsic to an understanding of occupational stress, empirical evidence for such moderating support has been mixed (Frone & McFarlin 1989) and it contributes little to the theory established in this thesis. According to Kenny et al. (2000), much research on the relationship between personality and stress receptivity has been exploratory, and ‘it is difficult to formulate interventions based on findings that a small amount of variance in the experience of occupational stress is accounted for by a particular personality characteristic’ (p. 18).

For Eysenck (1988), personality may be described as a ‘function of coping style’ (p. 18), that is in concurrence with a systemic framework. Coping behaviours are influenced by the sources of occupational stress (O’Driscoll & Cooper 1994) and the available resources and external support for dealing with them (Hart, Headey & Wearing 1995).
5.3.3 Organisational Functions and Occupational Stress

A similar trajectory to the one outlined above into personality, is the role that organisational factors play in the aetiology of occupational stress. This also has applicability to the role that the creation of positive emotions at the workplace has on the aetiology of occupational stress as outlined by Ashkanasy (2005). Cooper (1983; 1985) has categorised six groups of organisational variables that may cause stress in the workplace and some have applicability to the experiences of participants in the claims process as conceptualized in the main category of Structure:

1) Factors intrinsic to the job (such as heat, noise, chemical fumes, shift work)
2) Relationships at work (such as conflict with co-workers or supervisors, lack of social support)
3) Role in the organisation (role ambiguity)
4) Career development (such as lack of status, lack of prospects for promotion, lack of career path, lack of job security)
5) Organisational structure and climate (such as lack of autonomy, lack of opportunity to participate in decision making, lack of control over the pace of work)
6) Home and work interface (such as conflict between domestic and work roles; lack of spousal support for remaining on the workforce).

Responses arising from a psychological perspective have principally focused on secondary and tertiary intervention. Tertiary interventions include individual counselling, stress management programs, employment assistance programs and workplace mediation for conflict resolution (Appleberg et al. 1996). Secondary interventions include training and education (McRae & Cooper cited in Kenny et al. 2000). Such interventions were experienced by many of the claimants fundamentally in relation to the main category of Self. These types of interventions imply that the locus of stress resides with the individual, that the responsibility for change is with the individual workers, and that organisations are only responsible for assisting individual workers to change … since no attempt is made to reduce or remove environmental stressors, interventions can best be seen as attempts to increase workers’ tolerance of
noxious and stressful organisational, task and role characteristics’ (Bohle 1993, p. 92). This implication lacks highly useful analysis for this thesis because it ignores the role that macro factors, such as government policy, play in the production of stress.

This section has elucidated the lack of relevancy that psychological theories play in the construction of stress for participants in my research as has been conceptualized in the main category of Self.

5.3.4 Sociological Theories

The following five sub-sections focus on a sociological interpretation of stress which is highly relevant to an understanding of stress in this thesis. The approach of industrialist theorists has centred on the primacy of the social organisation of work as the determinant of occupational injury, illness and stress (Berger 1993) which has assisted in the presentation of findings in this research as well as with the development of the Grounded Theory of ‗Continual Resolving; A Tight-Rope Act! Kenny (2000) and Berger (1993) who also position occupational stress within a socio-cultural framework as have other identified industrial sociologists, such as Woods (1999), have been instrumental in the construction of the Grounded Theory as it has emerged from the data. For example Petersen argues:

social structures, the institutionalised conflict of interests between safety and productivity, the social division of labour, the labour process, industrial relations and policies are the root causes of occupational illness and stress (Peterson 1994, p. 495).

Kenny et al. (2000) further position occupational illness as a social process:
_The dimensions of which are not individualised, unique or specific‘ They contend _for every occupational illness or injury there are physiological and ergonomic components, whose affects are mediated by the social environment, specifically, the organisation of work and the sociology of medical knowledge surrounding the illness or injury‘ (Figlio 1982, cited in Kenny et al. 2000, p. 1).
The negotiation regarding the social and political meaning of occupational illnesses and their various social and economic implications happens prior to them being awarded the status of a syndrome (Willis 1994, cited in Kenny et al. 2000.) Interestingly, even while gaining recognition that such conditions are public issues, solutions are still sought in the individual (Kenny et al. 2000). It is, in this way, that the medical model gains ascendancy as a paradigm for understanding occupational stress.

The main contribution of sociological approaches to the analysis of occupational illness is that "occupational health and safety have increasingly become an industrial relations issue between capital and labour ... it has increasingly come to mediate the social relations of production" (Willis 1994, p.138). Therefore, the focus has moved from a fatalistic acceptance that there will be "casualties of the work process" to a legislated requirement that the employers provide a safe workplace for all employees" (Willis 1994, cited in Kenny et al. 2000, p. 19). McIntyre (1998, cited in Kenny et al. 2000) believes that "the cost of compensation is increasingly shaping occupational health and safety practices and procedures, and hence the labour process itself" (p.19).

Occupational stress occupies a similarly nebulous position in the medical nomenclature to that previously occupied by Repetitive Strain Injury. Research participants experienced anxiety relating to the indeterminate nature of their position and the social stigma associated with it, as identified in the sub-category of Mediating Support Structures in the main category of Self. An injured worker must demonstrate that the incidence of illness (presence of symptoms) is connected to the organisation of work. Stress is "a transactional process involving interactions between physiological, psychological, behavioural and organisational variables" (Kenny et al. 2000, p. 19), meaning that the demonstration of this causal nexus remains problematic for claimants.

The legislative requirement requiring the identification of a specific illness on the WorkCover certificate of capacity militates against the resolution of issues related to occupational stress. It perpetuates a notion of stress as being a purely psychological disorder manifest in weak people, precipitating the social stigma associated with it as identified in the findings of this research and conceptualized in the property of
Experiencing Alienation in the main category of Self. Kenny et al. concurs with this, stating:

Legitimating the experience of occupational stress medically may militate against an organisational or transactional solution to the problem, since certification, a process achieved through political action, has individualised the problem and returned full circle to the victim-blaming approach of the medical mode (Kenny 2000, p.19).

5.3.5 Systemic Theories

Systemic theories of occupational stress have been developed by researchers such as Frone and McFarlin, (1989) and others, some of which are outlined below. These are pertinent because to understand teachers’ work related stress, one must also explore, to some degree, how it is situated in broader personal, organisational, socio-cultural, and professional fields. As such, this was significant to the construction of the theory for this thesis. The research findings of Ezzy, Walter and Welch (2009) also describe the role of the WorkCover claims process in the generation of secondary stress in the claimants.

5.3.6 Person-Environment Fit Theories

Person-environment fit theory has used to understand the process of adjustment between employees and their work environment (Caplan 1987). This theoretical framework defines occupational stress in terms of work characteristics that create stress for the individual due to a lack of fit between the individual's abilities and attributes and demands of the workplace' (Caplan 1987, p. 253). Some participants commented about the lack of understanding their rehabilitation case-manager had about their return to work plan’. Participants were also concerned by the lack of input they personally had in developing the work plan.

Based on Caplan's approach, interventions are designed prior to vocational placement to measure discrepancies in fit. The interactions between the person and environmental
variables are identified as better predictors of strain than either personal or environmental variables considered separately (Caplan 1987). Critiques of this approach centre on the fact that in the real world, job characteristics and workers’ characteristics may influence each other in dynamic reciprocal ways (Kenny et al. 2000). Kulik, Oldham and Hackman (1987) characterise most person-environment fit theories as being too static and suggest they fail to address the on-going reciprocal influences of the environment and person, therefore such an approach lacked usefulness to the construction of theory for this thesis.

5.3.7 Demand-Control Theories

Demand-control theories are extensions of job strain models (Karasek 1979) and focus on the combined effects of job demands and job control of workers’ health. Demand is divided into workload, work hazards, physical and emotional demands, and role conflict. Control is related to the substantive complexity of work, administrative work, control of outcomes, skill discretion, supervision, decision authority and ideological control (Muntaner & Schoenbach 1994; Solderfelt et al. 1996, cited in Kenny et al. 2000).

In relation to demand and control, jobs have been classified into four categories: high strain jobs, low strain jobs, active jobs and passive jobs (Landsbergis et al. 1992, cited in Kenny et al. 2000). Generally, psychological distress is predicted by combinations of high demand and low control (Karasek 1990, cited in Kenny et al. 2000), and conversely, job satisfaction is correlated with an increase in control (Murphy 1998, cited in Kenny et al. 2000). The implication of control in occupational stress arises from organisational change process where control is ‘conceptualized as a stress antidote’ (Sutton & Khan 1986, cited in Kenny et al. 2000, p. 20). This theory has concurrence with the sub-category of Constantly Legitimating in the main category of Self because participants felt that they had limited control due to the requirement to continually legitimate with WorkCover personnel.
Johnstone and Hall (1998, cited in Kenny et al. 2000) expanded this model to include a support component incorporating co-worker and supervisor social support. To them, social support has positive effects on well-being, based on evidence that social support reduces the effect of occupational stressors on psychological distress. Greater symptomatology has been identified with low social support and high interaction, while demand and control have been identified with job dissatisfaction (Landsbergis et al. 1992, cited in Kenny et al. 2000). Likewise, in this research an important aspect in how participants resolved their claim was the level of social support they received. This is conceptualized in the sub-category of Support Selection in the main category of Self.

5.3.8 Cybernetics and Systems Theory

My theory which was influenced by aspects of cybernetics and systems theory, suggests that the claimants experienced alienation within the claims process largely due to the hostility they experienced from some WorkCover personnel, and because of the time it took to process claims. Cybernetics and general systems theory were developed concurrently, and are based on similar theoretical principles. Social systems theory emphasises wholeness, the interaction of component parts and organisation of unifying principals (Goldenberg & Goldenberg 1985, cited in Kenny et al. 2000) incorporating non-linear theories of causation (Cottone 1991, cited in Kenny et al. 2000). This resonates strongly with the operation of the component parts in the claims’ hierarchical structure as identified in the sub-category of Coping with Lack of Structural Understanding in the main category of Structure. This sub-category identified the claimants’ lack of understanding of the interrelationships between each component part, and their lack of knowledge of each component part.

Cybernetics can be understood as a science of ‘communication and control in man [sic] and machine’ (Edwards 1992; Frone & McFarlin 1989; Weiner 1948, cited in Kenny et al. 2000, p. 21); an epistemological foundation for personal and social change that focuses on mental process (Kenny 1983), whereby individuals monitor their psychological and physiological reactions to various stressors (Frone & McFarlin 1989, cited in Kenny et al. 2000).
According to cybernetic analysis, systems or organisations can undergo first or second order change. In first order change, negative feedback is the process whereby systems maintain their organisation through deviation-counteracting mechanisms such as homeostasis, morphostasis and self-correction’ (Sluzki 1985, p. 26). In second order change, positive feedback loops amplify deviation. When an individual identifies a difference between a perceived current state and another desired psychological and/or physiological state, this difference can create imbalance and discomfort, and feedback loops are initiated (Frone & McFarlin 1989, cited in Kenny et al. 2000). The individual then gives importance to the discrepancy; the degree of importance and meaning are determined by the individual (Edwards 1992, cited in Kenny et al. 2000).

There is a strong philosophical relationship between the concept of discrepancy in systems theory and ‗alienation‘ in Marx’s theory of the pathology of social change (Marx 1982, cited in Kenny et al. 2000); as there is with Durkheim’s concept of ‗anomie‘ (1897/1952, cited in Kenny et al. 2000). In applying these concepts to occupational stress, it may be argued that occupational stress occurs when through either individual changes, such as behavioural changes, or organisational change processes, a discrepancy arises between the personal values of the workers and the values of the organisation where they are employed (Woods 1999; Leiter 1999; Nias 1999). Participants in my research found a discrepancy between the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s values and their own values. This is conceptualized in the sub-category of Experiencing Alienation in the main category of Self.

Karasek and Theorell (1990, cited in Kenny et al. 2000) claim that the experience of occupational stress and its material manifestation (the lodging of a Workers’ Compensation claim) is the functional communication of distress brought about by alienation and is conceptualized in the sub-category of Experiencing Alienation in the main category of Self. Edwards (1992, cited in Kenny et al.) theorises that alienation can be understood as ‗thwarted desires, which produce negative emotions, such as anger, disillusionment, or the desire for retribution or revenge‘ (p. 22).

For Hart and Wearing (1995, cited in Kenny et al. 2000), decreased worker morale may be identified as a precursor to alienation if steps are not taken to rectify the morale
problem early in the cycle. Kenny et al. (2000) argue that the failure of some injured workers to return to work following workplace injury is due at least to some degree to a management failure to either believe that the injury was genuine, or to show care, concern and respect to the injured worker. These failures constitute a negative feedback loop in which workers experience a narcissistic injury that manifests in anger, hostility and a desire for revenge against management, leading to alienation between worker and management which is conceptualized in the sub-category of Experiencing Alienation in the main category of Self.

5.3.9 Rehabilitation Progress and Occupational Stress

This section focuses upon differing approaches to the rehabilitation of individuals who suffer from occupational stress, and the irrelevance to the research findings. There are four main approaches to rehabilitation programs for occupational stress as outlined by Kenny et al. (2000). Of these, two are relevant to my findings.

1) Expert technical approaches focused on the physical environment of work and work practices
2) Work psychology where illness is attributed to worker behaviour characteristics, as well as to some "immediate organisational behaviours such as pay systems, supervising environments, etc." (Kenny et al. 2000, p. 22)
3) Pseudo-psychology, a victim-blaming approach, which focuses on "individual worker behaviour such as malingering and accident-proneness, and leads to relative inexpensive employer corrective activities such as pre-employment health assessments, worker education and drug tests" (Kenny et al. 2000, p. 22)
4) Sociological approaches, which focus on broader social issues such as power structures, profit/production imperatives and gender, ethnic and class divisions as well as organisational behaviour" (Quinlan & Johnstone 1993, p. 3).

In relation to Kenny et al's. (2000) paradigm, which clarifies approaches to rehabilitation for workplace stress in the following ways, the sub-categories in the main category of Experiencing Alienation show some relationship to the Work-psychology and Pseudo-psychology understanding. However, the broad category of the expert technical approaches and the sociological approaches, reinforce the issues covered.
earlier in the section regarding the sociological theory of the creation of stress being influenced by wider social forces.

The expert technical approach may have improved the ergonomic environment of workers, but by itself, it cannot account for all occupational injury or occupational stress (Kenny et al. 2000). Roszaks (1986) concurs by stating that the problem of teacher stress has its roots in political and philosophical issues of the present which are not amenable to technical solutions. The work psychology and pseudo-psychology models have provided the dominant paradigm in tertiary rehabilitation but are still centred upon a medical model of linear causality (Cottone & Emener 1990, cited in Kenny et al. 2000, p. 22), as they attach a medical or psychological diagnostic label to the claimant. This focuses on one aspect of a complex system, and therefore militates for a successful rehabilitation outcome leading to victim blaming (Kenny 1995). In contrast, the political/advocacy approach based on a sociological analysis tries to resolve the environmental issues to the exclusion of inter-psychic problems (Kenny et al. 2000, p. 22).

The perspective embracing the ecological view of living systems dependent upon a healthy relationship with the environment (Kenny et al. 2000, p. 22), has some relevancy within the realms of the political, public and philosophical. This ecological view of occupational stress can be summarised as follows. Work related psycho-social stressors that are generated by social structures and processes affect humans through psychological processes, and are influential on health through four types of interrelated mechanisms: emotional, cognitive, behavioural and physiological. Situational factors (such as social support) and individual factors (such as personality and coping repertoire) are central in the modification of health outcomes. The work–environment–stress–health–system is dynamic, with manifold feedback loops. This suggests that the approach to intervention should be systems oriented, interdisciplinary, problem solving oriented, health (not disease) oriented and participative (Levi 1990, cited in Kenny et al. 2000, p. 23).
5.4 Psychological and Social Effects of Occupational Stress

The following section provides an overview of the psychological and social issues that claimants had to endure during the claims process, and identify the complex role of process-related psychological injury in how participants in this research experienced the claims process explicated in the main category of Self in this research. These sections illuminate the constant personal and psychological resolution required of participants to navigate the claims process which was fundamental to the construction of the theory for this thesis.

These sections further explicate aspects of the social psychological process operating throughout the claims process as experienced by participants (as outlined in Chapter 3) and conceptualized in the main category of Self. Aspects of the theoretical work of Axel Honneth (1995) such as his theory on recognition, are applied to assist with this. Participants experienced the claims process as producing negative psychological consequences for themselves because of practices associated with the day-to-day management and administration of their claim, and through inter-subjective relations that involved disrespect and humiliation for them (Parrish & Schofield 2007).

Examples of such practices from the data include a GP declining to take on a WorkCover stress case, the lack of debriefing following a mandatory psychological assessment and correspondence with an insurance company failing to receive a response. Some of the deleterious psychological consequences experienced by participants are documented in Chapter 4, in the sub-categories of Resisting Self-Stripping, Mediating Support Structures and Experiencing Alienation.

According to Parrish and Schofield (2007) there is evidence that systematic discrimination and prejudice against injured workers is a significant feature of the Workers’ Compensation claims process, which engenders additional negative psychological responses and adds to low self-esteem and a negative self-image. This discrimination and prejudice has been closely linked to particular types of workers, such as immigrant women, and with particular categories of injuries, such as stress-related illnesses, where medical diagnosis can be ambiguous (Bohle & Quinlan 2000).
Findings such as these are reflected in several qualitative studies of workers' experiences of Workers’ Compensation and occupational rehabilitation conducted in Victoria in the 1990s (see Calzoni 1997, Franckom 1992 & Roberts-Yates 2004). For example, Dr Roberts-Yates (2004) found that major problems existed in claims management, including indifferent case-managers and disrespectful communication from service providers. As a result, injured workers experienced such conditions as loss of self-esteem, self-worth and identity, loss of control, grief, feelings of shame, anger, stress, guilt anxiety, self-blame, depression, alienation and ‘disenfranchisement’. One of the most significant conclusions reached was that long-term engagement with Workers’ Compensation has a severely deleterious impact on injured workers’ sense of themselves, or their identities (Parrish & Schofield 2007, p. 33). Through the WorkCover process, they are transformed into 'claimants' rather than workers, resulting in ostracism, marginalisation and alienation from their colleagues, friends and family as a result (Parrish & Schofield 2007).

Wearing et al.‘s (1990) findings concur with the above, in that claimants felt helpless and powerless. They had low self-esteem and depression; felt alienated from fellow teachers, and experienced moderate paranoia. They also experienced family problems, felt forgotten, suffered anxiety and they felt anger. A study by Ezzy, Walter and Welch (2009a) found that participants reported on how the effects of social stigmatisation alienated them from their fellows, triggering a range of emotions including guilt, embarrassment, defensiveness, victimisation, abandonment, infectiousness, self-consciousness, unsociable behaviour and limitations on their exposure to social intercourse. Otto’s study (1982) lists experiences of pangs of helplessness, apathy, loss of motivation and low self-esteem.

The negative psychological feelings that participants in this research experienced has resonance with Honneth (1995), who argues:

> recognition is as fundamental to human beings as are material resources. This is because human survival requires the development of human identity or the transformation of human animals into human beings ... that human beings are brought into being through the acknowledgement and respect they receive through their relations with others over time, including those that prevail
within public institutions. If they are denied recognition, human beings suffer disrespect, humiliation and shame. The cumulative effect of such injury is a reduction in opportunities for individuals' development and their participation in social life (p. 133).

For Honneth (2003) there are enormous disparities in the social distribution of respect and recognition which he believes are co-extensive with the unequal distribution of material resources. If the problem of material inequality and the disparity in the distribution of recognition are indivisible as he suggests then the social distribution of recognition is not simply a reflection of material organisation. Patterns of distribution are derived from certain relational dynamics that exist within social institutions.

In relation to how participants in this research experienced the WorkCover claims process, Honneth's theory of recognition is useful for contextualizing the humiliation and dehumanisation that injured teachers experienced during their claim, suggesting this is integral with the nature of the interactions that constitute the process. Parrish and Schofield (2007) likewise argue that such relations are not merely unfortunate and incidental aspects of the process. They are intrinsic features of it' (p. 33).

5.5 Relational Practices

The Grounded Theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’ demonstrates that relational practices between WorkCover employed personnel, including medical professionals, insurance company officials and injured teachers, do not fit the bill of being simply rational exchanges. Using the theories and concepts of authors such as Parrish and Schofield (2007) in this section, this point is explored further in relation particularly to the sub-categories of Experiencing Alienation and Constantly Legitimating. The dissatisfaction and conflict the injured teachers recounted in their experiences of the claims process were encapsulated in institutional practices that caused them to feel unworthy, and undeserving of, their entitlement to social support. Such practices included having to lodge a certificate of capacity every twenty-eight days, having to obtain permission from WorkCover and only being permitted to consult specific medical practitioners approved by WorkCover.
For Parrish and Schofield (2007) “such interactions effectively stripped work-injured claimants of their identity as rights bearing citizens” (p. 33). Honneth (1995) explains that “the bearing of rights requires interactive practices of social inclusion that convey to individuals their sameness in enjoying the status of a full-fledged partner to interaction” (p. 133). The evidence present in this study, like Parrish and Schofield, demonstrates to varying degrees, the lack of mutual inclusiveness in the relations between the injured teachers and WorkCover employed personnel.

The sub-categories of Resisting Self-Stripping and Mediating Support Structures conceptualise the requirement for participants to have appropriate social support to successfully traverse the claims process. Social support in this context is perceived as being an imaginary landscape. Instead their reality is one where the injured are ostracized rather than nurtured and a social conscience across the professional coalitions is conspicuous by its absence (Roberts-Yates 2004, p. 904). Roberts-Yates (2004) purports that “the nature and quality of social support available to individuals determines health and general well-being” (p. 905). From the claimants’ perspective, such support was deemed a necessity for claim progression. Social support, as outlined in the sub-category Mediating Support Structures, was also deemed necessary to mitigate isolation, disenfranchisement and the feeling of being exposed, even in ordinary social interactions (Roberts-Yates 2004), as precipitated by the claims process. Roberts-Yates (2004) also deduced that interpersonal relationships within the process precipitate stress, anger, pessimism, a sense of powerlessness and threats of violence (p. 902).

Roberts-Yates (2004) found that the social stigma associated with being a WorkCover claimant had negative psychological consequences for participants. This was confirmed in my research. She acknowledged the anguish of many participants due to “the reinforcement of stereotypes with workers portrayed as abusing the system” (p. 904), suggesting these negative scenarios also hurt genuine claimants who stoically endured the stigma. This resonates with the responses of participants in my research, as was eloquently enunciated by the participant Bea:

I only told one or two people about my claim, I suppose I was embarrassed.
5.6 Alienation

Otto’s studies of state teachers and stress (1982; 1983 & 1986) incorporate Marx’s theory of alienation and influence my theory construction. Firstly, Otto’s application of the concepts of alienation and self-alienation is fundamental to explaining the effects of occupational stress. Self-alienation is the state by which human beings are alienated from themselves, a state in which they have lost their creativity.\(^\text{13}\)

For Swingewood (1975), the alienation engendered by the claims process denied the claimants’ potential for creative intelligence in the construction of a humane society progressively turning the claimant into a stranger in the world. The claims process was experienced as impersonal and influenced by external and alien forces (Swingewood 1975), a view also espoused by Parrish and Schofield (2007). These findings are replicated in my data and conceptualized in the sub-categories of Experiencing Alienation and Resisting Self-Stripping.

Alienation is a term originating with Hegel, and is used extensively by Marx to describe and criticise a social condition in which man [sic], far from being the active initiator of the social world seemed a more passive object of determinant, external forces’ (Swingewood 1975, p. 87). The social world in which people live appears hostile and dehumanised, a world where people are a stranger to themselves and others (Swingewood 1975). The claims process played a role in the precipitation of this state of dehumanisation and estrangement for participants in this research as explained by Swingewood (1975).

As found by Roberts-Yates’s (2004); Ezzy, Walter and Welch (2009); Otto (1983); and Parrish and Schofield (2005), alienation can be defined as a state of dispossession (Marx 1973, first published 1939), typical of that experienced by participants in this research. The following quotation by Fischer (1970) expands the concept of alienation and has applicability to this study:

\[
\text{man[sic] is alienated from his species-life that each man[sic] is alienated from others, and that each of the others is, likewise alienated from human life (p. 50).}
\]

\(^{13}\text{See Economic and Philosophical Manuscript by Marx for greater clarity of this terminology.}\)
Secondly, Otto’s use of Durkheim’s theorisation of education and the moral order in her studies, positioning his theory within a sociological framework has application to the findings in my research. That is where social systems can be more or less conducive to human needs for supportive, cohesive relationships and a clearly structured perception of the world (Durkheim, cited in Otto 1983). Such insights are directly relevant for participants negotiating the WorkCover claims process. The WorkCover claims process from the participants’ perspective was devoid of supportive and cohesive relationships. The response is conceptualized particularly in the property of Managing Social Isolation in the main category of Self. Otto further states that when such institutional structures fail to be supportive, peoples’ tolerance of difficult situations declines, and negative responses to these situations arise.

Evidenced in the sub-category of Experiencing Alienation in the main category of Self, as elaborated in this research, psychological process-related injury was found to be significant for participants as was also found in studies by Ezzy, Walter and Welch (2009a), Kenny (1998) and Lippel (2007). The congruence of my findings with three of these researchers helped strengthen an understanding of the emergent theory. For example Ezzy Walter and Welch (2009a) claim that the emergence of secondary psychological injuries for the claimants may be a consequence of experiences during the claims process, a view shared by Kenny (1998). She specifically acknowledged the psychological conditions of anxiety and depression as engendered by the claims process. Ezzy, Walter and Welch (2009a) refer to process-related psychological injury arising from individual’s experiences in the process suggesting that Workers’ Compensation process itself can detrimentally affect claimants’ physical and/or psychological states.

This section has articulated the relationship between several theories and concepts relating to occupational teacher stress and the Grounded Theory of Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act! by showing how claimants engage in perpetual psychological and personal resolving to traverse the claims process with the attendant likelihood of serious long-term consequences of alienation as espoused by Marx and others.
5.7 Bureaucracy

The section outlines the role of bureaucracy in shaping the experiences of the injured teachers in the claims process, and the constant resolution associated with this. It incorporates Max Weber's theories on bureaucracy which were highly significant to the development of my theory particularly in the sub-category of Dealing with Bureaucracy as evidenced and conceptualised in the Grounded Theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act’.

Freund’s (1970) assertion that ‘A bureaucracy is a technical means for obtaining specified ends efficiently’ (p. 68) can be applied in this context through an examination of the participants’ observations, which are conceptualised in the main category of Structure. Participants had a problematic relationship with bureaucratic practices, which is congruent with the findings of Parrish and Schofield (2007) and Kenny (1996). Robertson’s (2000) belief that ‘Power in procedural bureaucracy is derived from one’s structural position within the hierarchy’ (p. 195) for this problematic relationship, and positions bureaucracy relative to the emergent Basic Social Structural Process, as outlined in Chapter 3.

Participants commented that the WorkCover terrain was procedurally bureaucratic (Considine 1996, cited in Robertson 2000), finding it lacking in individualisation and impersonal. Bureaucratic procedures in the claims process rendered relationships as a series of neat transactions, compliant within normative administrative procedures, typical of capitalist management techniques (Robertson 2000).

Roberts-Yates (2004) believes that ‘Formal and informal message channels distributing information to injured workers should constitute the lifeblood of claims/injury management and rehabilitation practice’ (p. 902). Ambiguity, misinterpretation and the inability of the worker to understand this information causes high levels of frustration for the worker (Roberts-Yates 2004). Such frustration was evidenced in the data from which the sub-categories Experiencing Alienation and Constantly Legitimating emerged.
Many participants highlighted administrative inefficiency and experienced miscommunication when asked about relationships with WorkCover personnel. Participants complained that paperwork and documentation sent to the insurance company was repeatedly lost. Some participants developed complex systems that involved faxing, emailing and posting all documentation more than once to ensure it would reach its destination. They kept copies as a backup. Administrative inefficiency was also identified by the Victorian Ombudsman, as illustrated by the following quotations:

In some instances, accounts had been submitted on numerous occasions but had gone missing and not been paid (2011, p. 5).

No records were on file regarding contact from the service a provider, nor were there any written notes of conversations or copies of correspondence (2011, p. 42).

The following quotation from one of the respondents in Parrish and Schofield’s (2007) mirrors the findings from the data collected in my study. The respondent stated that ‘she experienced so many difficulties with her documentation getting lost that she resorted to sending it by express post so that she had a number to quote once the package was reported lost‘ (p. 34); however, this imposed additional financial stress.

Bureaucracy is the most typical example of legal authority (Parkin 1982) and can be observed to be operationalised in the claims process such as in the sub-category of Dealing with Bureaucracy in the main category of Self. According to Parkin (1982) it is based on the following principles:

1) The existence of specific services
2) Protection of officials in the exercise of their function under specific regulations
3) The hierarchical organisation of functions
4) Recruitment on the basis of competitive examination or diplomas attesting qualification
5) Regular remuneration
6) The right of the supervisor to regulate work of subordinates
7) Promotion opportunities (p. 234).
Bureaucracy has a 'decisive influence on the orientation of culture' (Freund 1975, p. 237), as is evidenced in the sub-category of Dealing with Bureaucracy in the main category of Structure, thereby contributing to the adversarial (Parrish & Schofield 2007) nature of the claims process culture. Participants' experience of bureaucracy within the claims process has concurrence with Weber's theory that the actual ruler is necessarily and unavoidably the bureaucracy' (cited in Parkin 1982, p. 88), which claimants identified in their claims experience

5.8 Legitimacy Claims

According to Parrish and Schofield (2007) WorkCover, like all large corporations, is organised according to bureaucratic principles that are operationalised in the interests of maximising profits and minimising costs. This section outlines how bureaucracy functioned to maintain hegemony for officials in the WorkCover claims process. Weber's theory on claims to legitimacy or the '_basic legitimations of domination' using the legal–rational type or bureaucratic domination is instrumental to this discussion of bureaucracy (Weber cited in Parkin 1982). He sees bureaucracy as the archetypal case for this type of domination because it can be expected to '_decit rational compliance' (Parkin 1982, p. 78). Legal-rational domination rests upon the '_appeal to the propriety of formally enacted rules and statutes' (Parkin 1982, p. 234).

The claims process from the participants' perspective operates within a legally constituted framework, and bureaucracy was used to enforce legally constituted rules and legal penalties, as well as controlling the means of information (Parkin 1982). The Victorian WorkCover Authority, as a statutorily enacted authority accountable to government and administering legislatively enforceable rules, regulations and consequences, renders this authority highly compatible with the legal–rational type of domination translating to consequences for claimants.

Participants in my study experienced a lack of individualisation, the inflexibility of the process and the statutory rules to which they were subject. As bureaucratic conduct is '_governed by a strict regime of regulation and discipline' (Parkin 1982, p. 34) and is a '_system governed by highly formalised and inflexible rules' (Parkin 1982, p. 34),
combined with being an _extremely blunt instrument of administration_‘ (Parkin 1982, p. 34). Parrish and Schofield (2007), Wearing et al. (1990) and Roberts-Yates (2004) concur with this assessment. They found that there was _too much red-tape_‘ (Wearing et al. p. 425). Wearing et al. argue that the claims process would be improved by _cutting down the bureaucracy_‘ (Wearing et al. p. 427) and Parrish and Schofield argue _that there was administrative inefficiency and miscommunication_‘ (2007, p. 31) as did participants in the claims process. Correspondence was _the result of electronic routine whereby the computer merely inserts the required name and address_‘ (Roberts-Yates 2004, p. 902) and Hanks (2008) asserts that there could be improved regulatory and administrative alignment in the system _through better alignment, where appropriate, with related administrative arrangements both within the State of Victoria and other jurisdictions_‘ (p. 8). All these findings are contemporaneous with evidence provided by participants in this research.

Most participants found that active engagement in the bureaucratic process generated varying degrees of angst thereby exacerbating their stress (see Ezzy, Walter & Welch 2009a). Attempts to engage proactively in the claims process at the micro level, by selection of a suitable rehabilitation course by participant Wanda, failed to be legitimised. WorkCover as a reified process could be understood as hegemonic (Gramsci 1971). Practices influenced dialogic and interpersonal relationships, and with intense maintenance and adherence to procedural bureaucracy (Considine, cited in Robertson 2000) operated within a vertical and highly hierarchical organisation (Robertson 2000).

The purpose of this section has been to elaborate on how bureaucratic practices shape the claims process, and to illustrate the way the claims process was operationalised and experienced by participants in this research. This section has demonstrated Weber’s conceptualisation of bureaucracy as _the representation of human relations, requiring, as it does, both the subordination of individual interests to those of the hierarchy and the depoliticization of individual action_‘ (Hummell 1982, cited in Bates 1987, p. 107), as was experienced by participants in the claims process. The WorkCover terrain is representative of the normalisation of institutional practices and is procedurally bureaucratic (Considine 1996, cited in Robertson 2000).
Power and Resource Imbalance

The next sections outline the role that power and resources played in the construction of the Grounded Theory of “Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!” As participants perceived a power and resource imbalance operating within the claims process this significantly affected their experience of the process, contributing to the requirement for continual resolving. This is evidenced in both the main categories and in the Basic Social Structural Process. Using Foucault and Habermas as contributory to theory construction, the findings of this research are situated with respect to a selection of their relevant theories relating to governmentality, systems of surveillance, and Habermas’s insights concerning technologies of power and communication.

5.9.1 Power Imbalance

Habermas’s theory on communicative action offers insight into the role of distorted communication, as identified in this research and conceptualized in sub-categories such as Constantly Legitimating and Dealing with Bureaucracy. As distorted communication also plays a role in a power differentiation within the WorkCover claims process, such analysis indicates ways of improving communication by addressing the need for structural adjustments to the claims process to allow it to be more open and transparent for the claimants. This was also an observation made in the Victorian Ombudsman’s Report (2011).

The power imbalance was manifest through a range of institutional practices including bureaucracy (as discussed in Section 5.8), the economic and legal consequences, and evidence concerning knowledge imbalances, and covert and overt surveillance techniques. These practices (and additional ones) were identified in Chapter 4 in the sub-categories of Experiencing Alienation and Constantly Legitimating. The experiences of participants in this research, as conceptualised above, demonstrate that these practices do not occur at random. They are closely tied to macro political, economic and social discourses or what Foucault would call “regimes of truth”. The effects of the practices on the micro world of the day-to-day WorkCover, practices—“regimes of practice”—expose the ways in which formalised, sanctioned and systematic
knowledge and institutional practices (in this case, WorkCover) become ‘mutually embedded’ (Foucault 1991, p. 78) within the claims process.

As Foucault states, ‘At the very heart of the power relationships, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom’ (1982, p. 790). It is in such ways as, enforcing unrealistic time-lines on participants, that policy ‘technologies’ are played out, with the complicity of the officials exerting power over WorkCover stress claimants. The Grounded Theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’ provides an accurate representation of how this power dynamic works to compromise participants’ claims trajectory, and their experiences with the claims process.

5.9.2 Foucault and Governmentality

Like Habermas (1971), Foucault (1979) was interested in the way in which the ‘rationalisation’ of societies has progressively resulted in a loss of individual freedom. Foucault’s Theory of Governmentality (1991) offers an appropriate conceptual tool for the explanation of how power over both the self and others is achieved through an analysis of practices, which are:

not just governed by institutions, guided by, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances … but possess up to a point regularities their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and ‘reason’. It is a question of analysing a regime of practices, practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted, meet and interconnect (Foucault 1991, p. 75).

Foucault’s theory enables a refocus on the injured teacher as a ‘subject’ of the powers vested in ‘pastoral’ institutions of the State (Foucault 1982), such as the Victorian WorkCover Authority. Foucault also suggests that governmentality is a point of contact, where techniques of the self can become entwined into coercive structures (Munt 2007). Through the examination of micro practices of the institution of WorkCover in this research, the sites of resistance and struggles as viewed through the lens of participants
throughout the claims process, become evident. An example is the appeal of a decision made by the assessing psychiatrist, by one participant.

The Victorian WorkCover Authority maintains the conditions for exerting power through its statutory authority to implement penalties on the claimant, such as the termination of weekly payments. This is not facilitative of change, and preserves the State's position as the dominating agent (Bernstein, cited in Apple 1982), with a significant role in fashioning injured teacher-WorkCover employees, professional relationships. For example, failure to comply with the claims process could result in payment termination. Such outcomes represent just one of the many forms of control and consent operating within the controlling regime (Foucault, cited in Burchall et al. 1991) which is employed as a mechanism for making claimants accountable to the public and the State for their claim (Smyth et al. 2000).

The power imbalance operating within the claims process was evident by participants' exposure to the conditional nature of the process and the penalties that an uncooperative and resistive claimant could incur. They also illustrate how the State uses law as a tactic to govern (Foucault, cited in Burchall et al. 1991); using the law as a way of arranging things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved (Foucault, cited in Burchall et al. 1991, p. 95). This way of appropriating the law is conceptualized as Dealing with Bureaucracy in the Grounded theory of _Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!_

To reiterate, participants' experiences of the routinised process entailed in making a stress claim were ultimately controlled through the disciplinary power of the State (Foucault, cited in Burchall et al. 1991). The injured teacher-WorkCover personnel relationship and other professional relationships within the claims process were instrumental to participants' experience. These relationships were fashioned through potential disciplinary action against non-conforming injured teachers, contingent within Foucault's (1977) theory, which implies that _The whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable_ (p. 179). And, as Ezzy, Walter and Welch (2009a) argue, the power-play between participants and WorkCover employed personnel was _conducted_
within the limits of relevant legislation, but with nuanced actions that tended to make life harder for respondents‘ (2009a, p. 8).

Interruptions to the normality of the claims process, such as requesting that meetings be held in open spaces (as participant Lyn did) challenge the power differentials at play within the process by questioning the _legitimization of dominating and dominated principles_ (Bernstein, cited in Apple 1982, p. 304). Such interruptions also challenge how these power differentials regulate the relationships between the actors within the WorkCover structure and affect participants‘ experience of it. Lyn’s request to undertake meetings in open spaces challenged the regulated meeting protocols, thereby attempting to interrupt and impose change on an aspect of the claims procedure. Such a request could be seen as a means of initiating a re-examination of the paradigm used in the meeting procedure, in the hope of influencing the expansion of the criteria governing where meetings could be held. As such, this action can be viewed from the perspective of critical theory as contributing to a critique of the existing order (see Horkheimer 1978). However, it also engendered anguish and anxiety for Lyn as experienced at the micro level.

5.9.3 Resource Imbalance

The experiences of participants (described in Chapter 4 in the sub-categories of Dealing with Bureaucracy and Experiencing Alienation) demonstrated that their lack of resources contributed to their perception of the inequitable power differential operating within the claims process and was regarded as a negative aspect of their claims experience.

This resource imbalance effectively constrained participants‘ agency to varying degrees (see Wearing et al. 1990), reinforced the legitimacy of the State in the claims process (see Robertson 2000), worked to engineer compliance and consent (see Smyth et al. 2000) and functioned to control claims trajectories and outcomes. Likewise, Ezzy, Walter and Welch (2009a) found that _limiting financial resources and uncertain financial futures constrain claimants‘ access to expert advice and vigorous pursuit of their full entitlements in all stages of their claim_‘ (2009a, p. 14). Some claimants did not
pursue lump-sum payments due to lack of finances (Ezzy, Walter and Welch (2009b), which suggests that lack of finances prohibits participants in a full exploration of the claims process.

As a State instrumentality, the Victorian WorkCover Authority has access to a vast quantity of resources, for example, access to a high level of finances and access to highly qualified legal personnel, as does the State. This was problematic for participants, and was perceived as being a significant controlling element operating within a controlling regime (Foucault, cited in Burchall et al. 1991). The State, with its access to high resources, and as the arbitrator in the formulation of WorkCover legislation, marginalised participants and reinforced its own dominant agency (Miliband 1977). Miliband’s theory provides a framework in which to view the role of the State’s political authority in leading to the maintenance of an ordered hierarchical relationship (Habermas 1979).

Such a power imbalance, was for participants in this research, unconducive to their operating on a level playing field. It restricted participants from full involvement in the claims process, and influenced both their claims’ trajectory and resolution. This was enunciated by participant Ann, who could not pursue her claim further due to exhaustion and lack of finances. Hegemony was assured through this imbalance, as was the hierarchical positioning of the stakeholders. Participants’ attempts at repositioning themselves in the claims hierarchy were limited by this resource imbalance.

Power imbalance and resource constraints acted to marginalise the claimants, and to reinforce the dominance of the Victorian WorkCover Authority and its agents thereby necessitating the development of strategies by claimants to confront and address this imbalance. These are conceptualized in the sub-categories of Confronting Lack of Resources and Dealing with Bureaucracy in the main category of Structure.

5.10 Surveillance

This section demonstrates the impact of surveillance on claimants’ progression through the claims process. The experience of overt and covert forms of surveillance of
participants were detailed in Chapter 4 in the sub-category of Dealing with Bureaucracy. The relentless surveillance, monitoring and technical control (Apple 1982) of participants contributed to low self-esteem and reduced their agency in the process, in addition to being instrumental in shaping the participant-WorkCover relationship and other professional relationships. Surveillance could be intrusive and confrontational; it could trigger anger, it was insulting and reinforced feelings of powerlessness for participants (Ezzy, Walter and Welch 2009a).

Surveillance in the WorkCover process is best represented by Bentham’s idea of the Panopticon designed “to produce an economy of power whereby the visibility of individuals was a mechanism through which they might be dominated” (Bates 1992, p. 203). A control regime operating through the rule of law, the traditional weapon of sovereignty (Foucault, cited in Burchall et al. 2000), bureaucratic practices, and surveillance and disciplinary techniques were operationalised throughout the claims process to enforce claimant compliance and consent. Surveillance operated to ensure that power stayed vested with the dominant groups (Gramsci, cited in Smyth et al. 2000). This facilitated the maintenance of the political authority of the State (Habermas), ensuring outcomes that were required by the State (Smyth et al. 2000).

Surveillance and control methods were implemented through requirements such as the production of monthly reports on the participants by rehabilitation case-managers, and submission of monthly certificates of capacity by the claimants. Methods such as these were implicit in the unsettling of participants, sometimes resulting in psychological distress, as acknowledged by participant Sandy who was subject to overt surveillance. These methods were complicit in the engineering of compliance and consent (Smyth et al. 2000), the securing of agency for the insurance company in the hierarchy (Parrish & Schofield 2007) and the limiting of teacher agency (Wearing et al. 1990). They were also instrumental to the maintenance of the locus of power within the State (Robertson 2000), the installation of institutional normative reproduction (Habermas 1989), and the maintenance of the authoritarian position of the Victorian WorkCover Authority and its agents. Surveillance was experienced by participants in this research as oppressive. It was perceived as a technique of control and consent, rendering tactics to confront it problematic.
5.11 Communication and Lack of Knowledge

The following sections describe the role that communication and lack of information played within the claims process and, how the shape of the claimants experiences of the claims process. Ambiguity, misinterpretation and the ability of the claimant to understand information caused a high level of frustration (Roberts-Yates 2007). This also led to misunderstandings by participants, about medical conditions and dissatisfaction with treatment (Roberts-Yates 2007) as explicated in the main category of Self.

According to Roberts-Yates (2007), there is a genuine understanding with all stakeholders in the stress claims process, that there are information requirements at each step of the claims process, and that from the outset of a claim „this information should be explicit and successfully managed“ (p.902). However, this was not realised for participants in this research who expressed dissatisfaction with communication, which was impeded by their lack of understanding and knowledge of the claims process, as described in the main category of Structure in Chapter 4.

5.11.1 Information Provision

An important theme that emerged in participants’ accounts of the claims process was the complete lack of information provision; access to relevant information was also viewed as limited. This was strongly associated with a profound lack of awareness and confusion about rights and entitlements following injury. For example, some participants were not aware that they had the right to change their rehabilitation provider.

Similarly, Wearing et al (1990) found that 53 per cent of respondents deemed that more information was required to ensure a more satisfactory claims experience. There was also dissatisfaction with the lack of individual letters to personalise the claims process. Respondents in Ezzy, Walter and Welch’s (2009a) study complained that the provision
Likewise, Kenny's (1995) data identifies the lack of information for participants as significant to their claims experience. In later research Kenny (1998) conducted into injured workers covered by the New South Wales WorkCover scheme, only 29 of the 407 respondents made any positive comments about their experience of the claims process, and these respondents had made claims for short-term injuries. Common concerns expressed in relation to the claims process included lack of assistance from key personnel, difficulty obtaining information about procedures in occupational rehabilitation and concerns about the nature of the injury; as well as delays in receipt of treatment approval. Kenny's (1998) study also identified that participants had difficulty obtaining information about procedures in occupational rehabilitation, about the nature of the injury and delays in treatment approval. These were all salient issues for participants and mirrored in the findings of my research.

5.11.2 Information Flow

A common concern of the above studies was the flow of information to participants. This was, to some extent, bound legislatively to the hierarchical structure functioned to shape the claimants consciousness. The intermittent lack of information and the obfuscatory information flow regulated the tempo of each claim. The flow of information played a role in how claims personal engaged in engineering control and surveillance. It was used in the claims process as an organisational and managerial tool, and was representative of the role of cultural knowledge in the process. The lack of cultural knowledge marginalized participants as is evident in the sub-category of Dealing with Bureaucracy in the main category of Self. It was also a factor in the consolidation of hierarchical authority within the process, and in shaping participants’ reinterpretation of their relationship with the process.

The regulation of the flow of information was a control and consent technique (Smyth et al. 2000), implicit in the unsettling of the participant and engineering the dominance of WorkCover and its agents in the process. The difficulty participants had in
deciphering WorkCover correspondence was also pertinent to the role that cultural knowledge played in the process, and was contributory to a dependence relationship for the participants. Both the Victorian WorkCover Authority and the insurance agents’ authority and hierarchical position were enhanced through information control.

Trust, respect and open communication are critical elements in the prevention of an adversarial relationship developing in the claims process (Roberts-Yates 2007). A breakdown in relationships can result in the precipitation of dispute procedures as occurred for some participants in this study.

5.11.3 Communication

Occupational stress can be viewed as a strategic communication of distress (Karasek & Theorell 1990, cited in Kenny et al. 2000). Toohey (1993) expanded this concept into a model of functional communication. In this model, dissatisfaction at the workplace may be manifested through illness behaviour (occupational stress), which is assessed as _a safe and acceptable manner in which to communicate distress_’ (Toohey 1993, p. 51). Kenny et al. (2000) question the safety and acceptability of this model in a workplace context, especially considering the stigma associated with mental illness and Victorian Workers’ Compensation claims generally. However, such methods are more acceptable than abusive outbursts, physical violence or acts of criminality, such as theft or property destruction (Kenny et al. 2000). This method of communication is closely related to the _systemic analysis of the function of the symptom in the system in which it occurs_’ (Hoffman 1981; Palazolli et al. 1986, cited in Kenny et al. 2000, p. 20). Aspects of this theory have relevance to findings in the main category of Self in the Grounded Theory of _Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act_!

5.11.4 Dynamic Equilibrium Theory

According to the dynamic equilibrium theory, stress is defined as a state of disequilibrium that arises when a change occurs that affects the individual’s normal levels of psychological distress and well-being. Stress is not defined as a demand,
response or process. It is necessary to assess separately the effects of personality, organisation, coping processes and both positive and negative work experiences to comprehend the cause of this change. Hart and Wearing (1995, cited in Kenny et al. 2000) argue that both stable personality characteristics and the dynamic interplay between coping and daily work experiences together account for changes in levels of psychological distress and well-being.

Hart, Headey and Wearing (1993) have proposed an innovative approach to the understanding of occupational stress by challenging the prevailing view espoused by theorists such as Selye (1975) and Cannon (1929). Hart, Headey and Wearing view stress based on an engineering model as the force exerted on a structure, which may then show signs of strain in response to that force. The missing aspect of this formulation is described as those characteristics which create susceptibility to strain, either through innate personality traits, behaviours, resource or organisational factors (Kenny et al. 2000, p. 21).

Through their research, Hart and Wearing (1995, cited in Kenny et al. 2000), show that psychological distress and work morale, as individual dimensions, made independent contributions to the quality of work life. This means that positive work experiences have an effect upon morale, and negative work experiences have an effect on psychological distress. Therefore, positive work experiences may increase morale, and psychological well-being can be improved by reducing negative work experiences.

The research by Ashkanasy (2005) purports that reducing negative emotions in the workplace promotes a sense of well-being and that well-being is encouraged through the maintenance of positive emotional health through workplace settings (p. 23). Ashkanasy (2005) declares that mental well-being of employees is determined in part by maintenance of positive effect (p. 24). Headey and Wearing (1992, cited in Kenny et al. 2000) found that teachers are not stressed as much by the nature of their work as by its organisational context.

These results imply that interventions should be focused on the development of a supportive organisational climate to enable workers to cope more adaptively with
operational work, rather than on interventions directed at change to the nature of the work *per se*. Strain occurs when an excess of elements (such as demands) may threaten one need; and, a deficit of elements (such as lack of communication or support) may threaten another. With this model, careful analysis of both positive and negative organisational characteristics is required before ameliorative intervention to the identified problems can ensue. To reduce secondary stress precipitated by the claims process, as identified by participants and conceptualised in the categories, properties and sub-properties, a more positive and less adversarial claims process is needed. Aspects of the Dynamic-Equilibrium theory, such as the state of arising disequilibrium, caused increased levels of stress which was identified by participants in the sub-category of Experiencing Alienation. The development of a supportive organisational climate within the WorkCover organisation, should have been encouraged to help claimants develop better adaptive strategies.

Communication was discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to theories of stress in the context of distress, which is relevant to the present discussion. Systemically distorted communication points back to systemically distorted social structures (Pusey 1987). Hence, changing the structure of the claims process would reduce distorted communication, allowing improved communication for all stakeholders. Habermas (cited in Pusey 1987) expresses the desire for a situation where disagreements and conflicts are rationally resolved through a mode of communication that is completely free of compulsion.

The application of this principle in the claims process would have benefited participants; however, changes to WorkCover legislation and the removal of legislatively-enacted penalties would need to occur for this to be realised. If, according to Pusey (1987), ‘new social and organisational structures, and indeed the very work of emancipation, grow out of communicative interaction’ (p.120), then communication between the claimants and other stakeholders needs to improve to facilitate better experiences for the claimants. ‘Communicative ethics’, as devised by Habermas (cited in McCarthy 1978, p. 325) are grounded in the fundamental norms of rational speech. ‘Communication that is oriented toward reaching understanding inevitably involves the reciprocal raising and recognition of validity claims’ (McCarthy 1978, p. 325).
Participants did not feel that communication within the claims process was conducive to reaching a comprehensive understanding of their needs. Such an understanding would require the recognition of their claims' validity. This validity would therefore be less contestable (Apple 1982), and communicative reason and interrelationships would be free of force (Pusey 1987).

Distorted communication was useful for the maintenance of the State as the dominant agent; and for institutionalising formulaic normalcy, embedded within an ensemble of rules (Foucault, cited in Burchall et al. 2000). It functioned to prevent an ideal-speech situation and to obtain open dialogic exchange, presenting a barrier for full participation in the claims process by participants.

Participants complained about the procedural language and ‘jargon’ used throughout the claims process. Hanks (2008) recommends the inclusion of ‘more user friendly language’ (p. 10). In Roberts-Yates’s (2007) study, participants perceived the adoption of incomprehensible, legalistic language significantly hinders the rehabilitation‘, and it reduces them to a mere number in an on-going and relentless process’. She also found that procedural language can erect barriers’ (p. 901). Further, procedural language was found to be confronting and antagonistic and it was akin to a secret code from which they are excluded‘ (Roberts-Yates 2007, p. 901). However, participants recognised the importance of the language used and its potential to become ‘a controlling mechanism’ (Roberts-Yates 2007, p. 901) used by those who have a monopoly of privileged information. Language can function as a kind of transformer (McCarthy 1978); however, in this context, it was used as a control and consent mechanism that engineered compliance (Smyth et al. 2000).

5.11.5 Lack of Knowledge

Lack of knowledge was a common reason given by participants for the difficulties they experienced while on Workers’ Compensation. Lack of knowledge was perceived as disadvantageous to comprehensive involvement in the claims process, and precipitated constant resolving. Participants in my research reported that obtaining the right
information was an arduous process, which was made even more difficult because they did not know which questions to ask.

Mutual understanding of the process serves to transmit and renew cultural knowledge (Habermas 1989). However, in the claims process, mutual understanding was limited, contributing to an imbalanced relationship. The Victorian WorkCover Authority and its insurance agents used their legal-rational mode of authority and cultural knowledge to regulate the flow and disclosure of information and knowledge to participants. This contributed to inequity in the process and estrangement within the relationship behaviour. The difficulty participants in my research had in interpreting institution-generated correspondence is encapsulated by Foucault’s (1980) declaration that, “Truth” is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions that produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitement (p. 132).

Participants’ need to seek clarification regarding the information contained in WorkCover correspondence (as outlined in Chapter 4, in the sub-category of Dealing with Bureaucracy) demonstrates the importance of cultural knowledge (Habermas 1989) in the claims process. The Victorian Ombudsman recommends the requirement that “any written correspondence leaving the agent is double checked or peer reviewed prior to dispatch” (2011, p. 9). This could reduce obfuscation and the cultural knowledge differential. “Cultural knowledge insofar as it flows into situation definitions …” (Habermas 1989, p. 174), “…seures a continuity of tradition and coherence of knowledge…” (Habermas 1989, p. 176). The WorkCover employed personnel had accrued a great deal of claims, procedural and other knowledge through habitual practice. This knowledge base was perceived as marginalising participants due to their varying degrees of compliance with, and comprehension of, the claims process. Consequently, there was a necessity for on-going clarification. This was where a battle between ‘lifeworld‘ (Habermas 1989) and ‘system‘ was played out.

The cultural knowledge and authority of WorkCover personnel and agents controlled information flow and disclosure to participants, thereby contributing to the imbalanced power relationship, obfuscation of the process, frustration of participants, and the securing of WorkCover’s dominant hierarchical position. Medical personnel were
imbued with professional and WorkCover procedural knowledge, which further maintained hierarchical positions. The injured teacher, devoid of a coherence of knowledge, (Habermas 1989) was positioned accordingly as marginal because of their lack of situated knowledge. In addition to marginalising participants, the power inherent in this structural position represents a level of determinism. This resonates with Habermas’s (1971) theory that “positioning in a structure is via power and control, that power is a derivative of structure operating in an historic bloc” (p. 137). The effect of structure “is that knowledge placed at the top of the hierarchy marginalises all other knowledge” (Bates 1987, p. 105).

Communication and lack of knowledge were demonstrated to be influential in shaping participants’ perceptions of the claims process in this research. They were also fundamental in their construction of corresponding combative strategies, thus legitimating their role in the Grounded Theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act’.

5.12 Conclusion

This chapter has situated the emergent theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’ within the extant literature. It has acknowledged the relevance and lack of relevance of selected authors to theory construction for my thesis. It has demonstrated the significant role of the Basic Psychological Social Process and the Basic Social Structural Process in the construction of deleterious experiences for the claimants, resulting from the power and resource imbalances operating at many points of the claims process.

Firstly, given that the claims process operates within a neo-liberal agenda, where claimants are “rendered more like clients” (Parrish & Schofield 2007) gaining efficiencies becomes the driving motivation for how the claims process is structured and managed. This would be explained using rationalist logic, which focuses on the basic motivations of an organisation embedded within corporate rationalist imperatives (Considine 1996, cited in Parrish & Schofield 2007). These motivations are instrumental in the shaping of the claimants experiences.
This theory is incorporated in the sociological explanation of stress, which was outlined earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, the theory of ‘punctuated equilibrium’, an organising concept which encapsulates the ‘conflicted nature of the worker’s compensation scheme’ and ‘focuses the attention on the conflictual and historical nature of the process’ (Purse, 2005, p. 9) is relevant. An aspect of the neo-liberal agenda is the payment of substantial incentives or bonuses to the WorkCover agents for achieving various measures. In the 2009–2010 financial year, the agents were paid a total of $30.3 million in incentive payments (Victorian Ombudsman 2011). However, the Victorian Ombudsman observed that to receive these incentive payments, some of the insurance companies (one in particular) ‘artificially distorted the record of [14] … compliance’ (2011, p. 4).

A neo-liberal agenda is also played out in ‘techniques of governance’ (Foucault 1980, cited in Parrish & Schofield 2007). These function to ration citizens’ access to State financial support more stringently than ever, especially if such support is the sole or principal means of economic survival’ (Parrish & Schofield 2007, p. 35). Roberts-Yates (2007) concurs with this, and further states that the focus is on ‘cost containment’ suggesting that the claims process ‘lacks a total person response’ (p. 900).

The emergent theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’ complements the understanding of social-structural conditions, as well as identifying the role of moderating variables in shaping the experiences of the research participants in the claims process. The next and final chapter of this thesis outlines the implications for future research, and makes recommendations for policy direction.

\[14\] Name deleted to protect anonymity.
Chapter 6: Implications and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how this study has achieved its aims and purposes, as outlined in Chapter 1. It acknowledges the limitations of the research, presents the methodological implications of the research, and concludes with recommendations for further research. The research outcomes are scrutinised in relation to several significant theoretical issues, including the implementation of techniques of surveillance, control and consent and the application of bureaucracy. The chapter concludes with some recommendations for future Victorian and Australian studies.

The emergent theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’ identifies how WorkCover stress claimants experience the WorkCover stress claims process, and how they attempt to resolve their main concerns within the claims process. The study has examined the WorkCover stress claims process through state school teachers’ experiences. Guided by a constructionist perspective, Grounded Theory methods were employed to construct categories from the data, which were used in the interpretation of the participants’ experiences of the WorkCover stress claims process. Although it is acknowledged that generalisability is limited, this study contributes to the knowledge in this field. The researcher’s past experiences as a WorkCover stress claimant have been useful in identifying the need for research based on participants’ experiences. Grounded in the data, the findings of this study are highly relevant to our understanding of the Victorian WorkCover context in which it takes place.

6.2 Glaser’s Principles for Evaluating Theory

As outlined in Chapter 2, the aim of using Grounded Theory methodology is to develop theory that has relevancy for the people within the substantive area of inquiry. Glaser’s four criteria for evaluating Grounded Theory are fit, work, relevance and modifiability (Glaser 1978; 1998). Glaser (1978) states that such theories ‘fit, work, are relevant and potentially have a myriad of specific uses, for many fields’ (p. 164). The following
sections demonstrate how the Grounded Theory of this research has satisfied the four criteria.

6.3 Fit

Fit represents the outcome of the method of constant comparison’ (Glaser 1998, p. 18). To meet this criterion, the categories have to have arisen directly from the data, and must not have been forced to meet the data (1978), as was the case in this research. The categories in this research emerged very quickly—this does not concern Glaser as long as emergent categories are refitted to the existing data, which was done in this case. Appendix G shows how this occurred through interview questions that were adapted to accommodate new insights generated within existing codes during the open coding stage.

6.4 Workability

A theory that works explains what happened or what is happening in an area of substantive or formal inquiry (Glaser 1992). The theory that was developed in this research study satisfies this criterion because it accounts for the variation in the experiences of the injured teachers, without unexplained exceptions.

6.5 Relevancy

The third criterion for a well-constructed theory is that it must have relevance to the people in the area of study. The theory that was developed in this study satisfies this criterion because the in-depth interviews that served as the primary source of data focused on what was important from the participants’ perspective. Participants would have had difficulty engaging with the interviews if the subject matter was abstract, trivial or irrelevant to them (Glaser 1978).
6.6 Modifiability

Theory must be readily modifiable so that when new data reveal variations in concepts or relationships, one is not forced to discard the entire theory. The theory in this study meets this criterion because a key element of the constant comparison method of analysis is the progressive modification and refinement of the evolving theory. Whenever new data presented variations in emerging concepts during analysis, the theory was modified to accommodate those variations. The resulting theory is so intimately linked to the data, that it is destined to last even if the new data reveals the necessary modifications (Glaser 1978).

Glaser (1998) states that theory should be used ‘meaningfully’, and be ‘trustworthy to use’ (p. 238); and it should not be ‘based on impressionism, nor conjecture, but on a rigorous methodology that empowers’ (1998, p. 238). It should, as was also outlined in Chapter 2, be ‘allowing of creativity’ (Glaser 1978, p. 20), which was elucidated with a quotation from Basics Of Grounded Theory Analysis (1992).

6.7 Significance of This Study for People in the Substantive Area of Inquiry

As was adumbrated in the preceding section, the aim of utilising Grounded Theory methodology is to produce theory that holds relevance for participants in the substantive area. The previous discussion regarding Glaser’s (1978) criteria for the evaluation of a Grounded Theory reinforces the aim of using this methodology to develop theory that has relevance for the people within the substantive area of inquiry.

The emergent quality of the Grounded Theory of ‘Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!’ only empowers the teacher stress claimants by allowing them to participate in research that could contribute to modifications to the WorkCover stress claims process. It also provides new insights and generates alternative understandings of the stress claims process for those informing WorkCover policy production and stakeholders in the process, including treating medical professionals, insurance company professionals, school principals and school staff.
These findings are valuable for state teachers who are considering making a WorkCover stress claim, and for those who make a claim in the future. By providing them with insights into, and giving specific examples of, how the stress claims process operates, the research findings could help to mitigate the marginalisation of claimants within the process. These findings can be of assistance to the Victorian WorkCover Authority in the development of new worker's compensation policy to improve the claims process, and to minimize the obstacles associated with the day-to-day management and administration of the claims process.

These new understandings could inform change by operating in conjunction with older understandings of the relationships between teacher stress claimants and the WorkCover claims process, or by rendering older understandings redundant. This could precipitate change to policy production and administration, incorporating adaptations that have been mediated by the injured teachers to allow for "local contingencies" as required.

6.8 Theoretical Implications

To my knowledge, no research into this substantive area has used Grounded Theory methodology. Quantitative methods have been used, mainly drawing on a positivistic epistemology, which excludes experiences such as marginalisation and disillusionment from being explored. Using a Grounded Theory approach to identify such constructs and incorporate them into theory offers an alternative and useful way of conceptualising the experiences of state school teachers involved in the stress claims process.

6.9 Limitations

This research has developed a substantive Grounded Theory of the WorkCover stress claims process as experienced by state school teachers. By its nature, a substantive theory usually has a local focus, and therefore, claims cannot be made about its generalisability (Glaser & Strauss 1967). However, the more recent academic work by Eisenhardt (1989) and Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) regarding the generalisability of research findings suggests that research findings from the evidence generated from case study methods have greater generalisability, and that challenges associated with this
research strategy can be mitigated by the use of precise wording about research questions and thoughtful research design of those questions.

The context of the study is limited to a Victorian focus. The limited extant literature and methodological perspectives framing of the research are a response to the dearth of research into this field. More research is needed to advance the understanding of the WorkCover stress claims process as experienced by state school teachers.

Given the scarcity of research from the claimants' perspective on this process, the key findings should be helpful for the Victorian WorkCover Authority's employees and their agents in considering how to support injured teachers best. The findings would also be of value to the WorkCover policy makers, contributing to the design of policy that supports and understands injured teachers better. Further, this research highlights the need to provide more complete knowledge and understanding about the process to current and future teacher claimants.

### 6.10 Further Research

The research has identified several areas for future exploration. These include (a) further research to ascertain the generalisability of the findings in this research and (b) further research into the main issues identified such as, the alienation associated with the claims process and the role of bureaucracy in the process. Other opportunities for researchers with the available time and resources could include a study of Workers' Compensation stress claims processes in other contexts with similar attributes; for example, the experiences of non-metropolitan state teachers, or teachers in other states.

Further studies may also be conducted using qualitative methodology, such as ethnography, Grounded Theory or hermeneutics, to explore ways in which Australian public school teachers experience and negotiate Workers' Compensation stress claim systems. Australian cross-jurisdictional studies would offer the opportunity for comparative studies of Workers' Compensation stress claims schemes.
Future research could have policy implications resulting from a better understanding of how public school teachers experience Workers’ Compensation stress claims processes, which contribute to a more effective policy, with relevance to longer-term planning. Finally future research could explore the relationship between the teacher’s age when beginning a stress claim, the duration of the claim and the claim’s trajectory. This could provide further insight into age-related experiences within the claims process, such as the relationship between age and time frames around the resolution of issues. This could also be applied to investigating issues relating to the teacher’s career when submitting a stress claim, enabling the development of a more nuanced claims policy.

This theory-building research has shown that the experience of the WorkCover stress claims process is a more complex phenomenon than the limited extant literature has suggested, and provides the foundation for further research into this phenomenon.

6.11 Future Implications for the Research Agenda on WorkCover Policy

This study recommends a change in policy to accommodate the major findings of Hank’s (2008) review, including the need for more transparency and accountability, more flexibility in the process, and the use of more inclusive language. Such changes in policy require a redistribution of resources, which can only occur if the process is more inclusive. This would lead to a change in the power balance, with more resources allocated to the claimants and a more equitable distribution in claims process.

The findings of this research reinforce the value of Grounded Theory, which has enabled numerous issues to be identified from the data provided by participants. Maintaining a balance between developing a claims policy inclusive of participants’ concerns and enacting efficiencies is a challenge for the Victorian WorkCover Authority and the state under which it operates.
6.12 Conclusion

The Grounded Theory of _Continual Resolving: A Tight-Rope Act!_ contributes significantly to the literature on the relationship between Victorian state school teachers and the WorkCover stress claims process. It offers explanations that are grounded in the data, rather than deduced from the literature. As acknowledged in Chapter 1, to my knowledge, this study is the first of its type on this subject, and as such, it redresses the paucity of grounded empirical investigation into the WorkCover stress claims process. The outcomes support the notion that further large-scale studies are necessary to gain useful information congruent with the aims of this study, which provides a greater understanding of the injured teachers' perspective on the WorkCover stress claims process.
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Appendix A

April, 2010

Investigation into how State Secondary School Teachers Experience the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s Stress Claims Process.

My name is Wendy Pollard, I am a long term AUE member and I am studying for a Master of Arts (by Research) at Swinburne University of Technology. My supervisors of this research are Associate Professor Janet Bryant and Associate Professor Di Bolton from the Faculty of Higher Education. I'm seeking your consent to a) display a small advertisement on the ground floor or library of the AEU headquarters seeking participants for this research study and b) place a small flyer in a copy of the AEU NEWS: Victorian Branch magazine also requesting participants.

The aim of the project is to explore the relationship between Victorian State teacher WorkCover stress claimants and the WorkCover process. I am interested in the effectiveness of the policy process for State secondary teachers. I feel that it is vital to document the experiences of individual teachers, compare them with others and discover if consistency prevails in the WorkCover process. As WorkCover teacher stress claims are increasing, it is important to measure the effectiveness of the policy and identify the problems teachers have with it.

I am seeking practicing and non-practicing State secondary school teachers from metropolitan Melbourne schools between the ages of 22–55, whose WorkCover claim has been FINALIZED and who are prepared to undertake a forty-five minute interview in an environment comfortable for them.

Rest assured that no findings will be published that could identify any individual participant. Anonymity is assured by our procedure, in which participants are not asked to provide their name or school/previous schools in the interview. All names, places,
and locations will be given pseudonyms and duration of events will be given in approximate time frames. Access to data is restricted to my supervisor and to me.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and even if the teacher agrees to participate, they still may withdraw their participation at any time. If they withdraw after the interview, their transcript will also be withdrawn and no information provided will be used in the final report.

AEU officer Helen Stanley has been involved with me regarding my personal WorkCover matters so I’m sure she can attest to my credibility.

If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the overall research finding, please contact the Graduate Studies office on: 92145224.

Kind Regards
Wendy Pollard
Appendix B

WorkCover Study

Participants required for research into the WorkCover stress claims process undertaken by a Master of Arts student at Swinburne University of Technology.

If you are a current or former State Secondary school teacher between the ages of 22–55, who has been a WorkCover stress claimant and whose claim has been FINALIZED and would be willing to talk about your experience please consider participating.

One interview of about 45 minutes will be undertaken. I have been a WorkCover stress claimant and am a current AEU member. Sensitivity and anonymity will be assured. Pseudonyms will be used for all names, places, locations and duration of events will be given in approximate time frames. The results will be contained within a thesis.

Please contact Wendy Pollard on email <6990304@student.swin.edu.au>
Appendix C

WorkCover Study

Participants required for research into the WorkCover stress claims process undertaken by a Master of Arts student at Swinburne University of Technology.

If you are a current or former State school teacher between the ages of 22–55, who has been a WorkCover stress claimant and whose claim has been FINALIZED and would be willing to talk about your experience please consider participating.

One interview of about 45 minutes will be undertaken. I have been a WorkCover stress claimant and am a current AEU member. Sensitivity and anonymity will be assured. Pseudonyms will be used for all names, places, locations and duration of events will be given in approximate time frames. The results will be contained within a thesis.

Please contact Wendy Pollard on email <6990304@student.swin.edu.au>
Appendix D

Consent Information

April, 2010

An Exploratory Investigation into how State School Teachers experience the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s Stress Claims Process.

My name is Wendy Pollard and I am studying for a Master of Arts by Research degree at Swinburne University of Technology. This degree consists of a 50,000–60,000 word study and is supervised by Associate Professor Janet Bryant and Associate Professor Di Bolton in the Faculty of Higher Education. I invite you to consider participating in this project, the details of which appear below.

The aim of the project is to explore the experience of Victorian State secondary teacher WorkCover stress claimants. I am interested in the efficacy of the policy process for State secondary teachers. My objective is to document the experiences of individual teachers and compare them with others to discover if consistency prevails in the application of the policy. The results of which will be contained within a thesis. WorkCover teacher stress claims are increasing so it is important to consider the efficacy of the process, identify the problems teachers have with it, and offer recommendations for policy change.

I am seeking State secondary school teachers from Melbourne metropolitan schools who have been, but are not currently WorkCover stress claimants (claims must be FINALIZED), who are prepared to undertake a forty-five minute audio taped interview in an environment comfortable to them at a Swinburne University campus. Attached is the list of questions you will be asked in the interview. The open-ended nature of the questions will allow you to include information you consider important and relevant.
The Australian Education Union has assisted me in the recruitment of study participants. They AEU allowed me to place an advertisement in their magazine recruiting participants. At no time has any of your personal information or information relating to your claim been released to me.

Rest assured that no findings will be published that could identify any individual participant, place or location; pseudonyms will be used. Anonymity is assured by our procedure, as you are not asked to provide your name or your school name in the interview and duration of events will be given in approximate time frames. Access to data is restricted to my supervisor and me. Data will be stored in a secure place and signed consent forms will be stored in a separate secure place accessible only to me.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and if you agree to participate, you still may withdraw your participation at any time and all interview questions are voluntary. If you withdraw after the interview, your transcript will also be withdrawn and formation you provided will be used in the final report. The final thesis will be available to all study participants.
If you would like further information about this research please feel free to contact my supervisors:

Associate Professor Janet Bryant  
Head of the Business and Technology Group  
Faculty of Higher Education  
Swinburne University of Technology  
Lilydale  
Telephone number: 92157156  
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Associate Professor Di Bolton  
Director of Post Graduate Research  
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Swinburne University of Technology  
Lilydale  
Telephone number: 92157330  
Email: dbolton@swinburne.edu.au

Thank-you,  
Wendy Pollard

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact:

Research Ethics Officer, Swinburne Research (H68)  
Swinburne University of Technology  
P.O. Box 218, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122  
Tel (03) 92145218
Appendix E

Consent Information

April, 2010

An Exploratory Investigation into how State Teachers Experience the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s Stress Claims Process.

My name is Wendy Pollard and I am studying for a Master of Arts by Research degree at Swinburne University of Technology. This degree consists of a 50,000–60,000 word study and is supervised by Associate Professor Janet Bryant and Associate Professor Di Bolton in the Faculty of Higher Education. I invite you to consider participating in this project, the details of which appear below.

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I am seeking State secondary and primary school teachers from Melbourne metropolitan schools who have been, but are not currently WorkCover stress claimants who are prepared to undertake a forty-five minute audio taped interview in an environment comfortable to them at a Swinburne University campus. Attached is the list of questions you will be asked in the interview. The open-ended nature of the questions will allow you to include information you consider important and relevant.
The Australian Education Union has assisted me in the recruitment of study participants. They AEU allowed me to place an advertisement in their magazine recruiting participants. At no time has any of your personal information or information relating to your claim been released to me.

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Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and if you agree to participate, you still may withdraw your participation at any time and all interview questions are voluntary. If you withdraw after the interview, your transcript will also be withdrawn and no information you provided will be used in the final report. The final thesis will be available to all study participants.
If you would like further information about this research please feel free to contact my supervisors:

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Lilydale  
Telephone number: 92157330  
Email: dbolton@swinburne.edu.au

Thank-you,  
Wendy Pollard

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact:  

Research Ethics Officer, Swinburne Research (H68)  
Swinburne University of Technology  
P.O. Box 218, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122  
Tel (03) 92145218
Appendix F

Consent Form

Project Title: An Exploratory Investigation Into how State School Teachers Experience the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s stress Claims Process.

Principal Investigator(s): Wendy May Pollard

Supervisors: Associate Professor Janet Bryant
            Associate Professor Di Bolton

1. I consent to participate in the project named above. I have been provided a copy of the project information statement and this consent form and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

[For 2/3 below, list as appropriate or add as necessary and delete those not applicable to your project; then delete this instruction.]

2. Please circle your response to the following:

   • I agree to be interviewed by the researcher          No  Yes
   • I agree to allow the interview to be recorded by electronic device No  Yes
   • I agree to make myself available for further information if required No  Yes

3. I acknowledge that:

   (a) the possible side effects have been explained to me to my satisfaction;
   (b) my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation;
   (c) the project is for the purpose of research and the completion of a thesis and not for profit;
   (d) any personal or health information about me which is gathered in the course of and as the result of my participating in this project will be (i) collected and retained for the purpose of this project and (ii) accessed and analysed by the researcher(s) for the purpose of conducting this project;
   (e) my anonymity is preserved and I will not be identified in publications or otherwise without my express written consent;
(f) my WorkCover claim has been FINALIZED.

By signing this document I agree to participate in this project and can withdraw at any time.

Name of Participant: ...................................................................................

Signature & Date: ………………………………………………………………

If you would like further information about this research please feel free to contact my supervisors:

Associate Professor Janet Bryant
Head of the Business and Technology Group
Faculty of Higher Education
Swinburne University of Technology
Lilydale
Telephone number: 92157156
Email: jbryant@swinburne.edu.au

Associate Professor Di Bolton
Director of Post Graduate Research
Faculty of Higher Education
Swinburne University of Technology
Lilydale
Telephone number: 92157330
Email: dbolton@swinburne.edu.au

Thank-you,
Wendy Pollard
Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact:

Research Ethics Officer, Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology,
P.O. Box 218, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122
Tel (03) 92145218
Appendix G

Interview Questions: Interview 1

1. Did you lodge a WorkCover claim for occupational stress between the years 2000–2010?
2. Could you please outline your experience with the WorkCover claims process and your claims management without naming the people concerned such as, your school principal; bursar; your insurance company; your rehabilitation provider; WorkCover medical personal; your treating doctors; education department officials; conciliation officials; retraining providers and anyone appropriate to your claims management and the WorkCover process.
3. How would you describe your WorkCover claims management experience?
4. Were there any critical incidents in the process that you would like to discuss?
5. How long did your WorkCover claim last? Do you feel this was a sufficient length of time to be processed? Why/Why not?
6. How did your claim end?
7. What are you doing now?
8. How would you improve WorkCover claims management and the WorkCover structure?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix H

Interview Questions 2: after Interview 1 to Interview 3

1. Was your WorkCover claim for occupational stress lodged between the years 2000–2010?
2. Could you please outline your experience with the WorkCover claims process and your claims management without naming the people concerned such as, your school principal; bursar; your insurance company; your rehabilitation provider; WorkCover medical personal; your treating doctors; education department officials; conciliation officials; retraining providers and anyone appropriate to your claims management and the WorkCover process.
3. How would you describe your WorkCover claims management and experience? Did you feel that your needs were met and that you had input into the decision-making process?
4. Were there any critical incidents in the process that you would like to discuss?
5. How did your claim end?
6. How would you improve WorkCover claims management and the WorkCover structure?
7. Would you like to add anything else?
Appendix I

Interview Questions 3: after Interview 1 to Interview 4

1. Was your WorkCover claim for occupational stress lodged between the years 2000–2010?
2. Could you please outline your experience with the WorkCover claims process and your claims management without naming the people concerned such as, your school principal; bursar; your insurance company; your rehabilitation provider; WorkCover medical personal; your treating doctors; education department officials; conciliation officials; retraining providers and anyone appropriate to your claims management and the WorkCover process.
3. How would you describe your WorkCover claims management and experience? Did you feel that your needs were met and that you had input into the decision-making process?
4. Did you feel pressurized to accept decisions made for you? What were they?
5. Did you feel oppressed by the process? How?
6. Were there any critical incidents in the process that you would like to discuss?
7. How did your claim end? Were you satisfied with this end?
8. How would you improve WorkCover claims management and the WorkCover structure?
9. Would you like to add anything else?
Appendix J

April, 2010

Dear Kathy,

I hope you are well.

You were involved with my WorkCover stress claim appeal in 2007, and helped gain a positive outcome for me.

I'm studying for a Master of Arts by Research at Swinburne University of Technology under the supervision of Associate Professor Janet Bryant and Associate Professor Di Bolton. My research is concentrated on State secondary school teachers and the WorkCover stress claims process.

The aim of the project is to explore the relationship between Victorian State secondary teacher WorkCover stress claimants and the WorkCover process. I am interested in the efficacy of the policy process for State secondary teachers and aim to document the experiences of individual teachers, compare them with others and discover if consistency in the implementation of the policy prevails. The results of which will be contained within a thesis. As WorkCover teacher stress claims are increasing, it is important to examine the process and identify problems teachers have with it.

I want to recruit teachers from Melbourne metropolitan State secondary schools, whose WorkCover claim has been FINALIZED and especially ones whose claims occurred this decade. Would you be willing to assist me by contacting any teacher claimants who you think might be interested in being interviewed by me about their claim? To participate they could either contact me directly or you if you are comfortable with it.

Rest assured that no findings will be published that could identify any individual participant. Anonymity is assured by our procedure, in which participants are not asked to provide their name or school/previous schools in the interview. All names, places and
locations will be given pseudonyms and duration of events will be given in approximate time frames. Access to data is restricted to my supervisor and to me.

Participation in this research will be entirely voluntary, and if the teacher agrees to participate, they still may withdraw their participation at any time and all interview questions are voluntary. If they withdraw after the interview, their transcript will also be withdrawn and no information provided will be used in the final report.

Kind Regards
Wendy Pollard

Should you have any concerns about research project, please contact me or one of my supervisors:

If you would like further information about this research please feel free to contact my supervisors:

Associate Professor Janet Bryant
Head of the Business and Technology Group
Faculty of Higher Education
Swinburne University of Technology
Lilydale
Telephone number: 92157156
Email: jbryant@swinburne.edu.au

Associate Professor Di Bolton
Director of Post Graduate Research
Faculty of Higher Education
Swinburne University of Technology
Lilydale
Telephone number: 92157330
Email: dbolton@swinburne.edu.au
Thank-you,
Wendy Pollard

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact:

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Swinburne University of Technology
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Tel (03) 92145218
Appendix K

Recruitment poster for the Australian Education Union Office

WorkCover Study

Participants required for a research study into the WorkCover stress claims process undertaken by a Master of Arts by Research student at Swinburne University of Technology.

If you're a state secondary school teacher who's been a WorkCover stress claim-and would like to talk about this experience and the stress claim process please consider participating.

One interview will be required, undertaken by me who has been a WorkCover stress claimant and who is a current AEU member. Sensitivity and anonymity will be assured.

Please contact Helen Stanley at the AEU for further information.
Appendix L

Recruitment poster for the Australian Education Union E-magazine.

WorkCover Study: Participants Required

Government secondary school teachers required for a Master of Arts research study (Swinburne University of Technology).

I need ex or current government school teachers who have made a WorkCover stress claim and would like to undertake a short face to face interview about their claims experience. All claims must be FINALIZED.

Anonymity, confidentiality and sensitivity will be assured. I’m an AEU member, a past WorkCover stress claimant and I aim to make changes to the policy.

Please contact me on 6990304@student.swin.edu.au

Many thanks,
Wendy
Appendix M

From: Keith Wilkins [KWilkins@groupwise.swin.edu.au]
Sent: Monday, 19 April 2010 2:45 PM
To: Janet Bryant; wendy pollard
Subject: SUHREC Project 2010/010 Ethics Clearance

To: Dr Janet Bryant/Ms Wendy Pollard, FHEL

Dear Janet and Wendy

SUHREC Project 2010/010 An Examination of the Relationship Between the Victorian WorkCover Authority's Claims Process and State Secondary Teacher Stress Claimants
Dr Janet Bryant, FHEL; Ms Wendy May Pollard Approved Duration: 19/04/2010 to 13/01/2012 [Adjusted]

I refer to the ethical review of the above project protocol undertaken by Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC). Your responses to the review were as emailed on 31 March 2010 and 9 April 2010, the former attaching the revised research protocol and instruments, the latter attaching specific responses to the SUHREC queries. The combined documentation was put to a SUHREC delegate for consideration. I also acknowledge your email of 17 April 2010 clarifying revised project duration.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, the project has approval to proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions here outlined. Please also note that approval is given on the understanding that were required proper and timely permission(s) to involve other organisations would be established; copies of any formal letter(s) from the organisation(s) should for the record be forwarded to the Research Ethics Officer as soon as practicable.
- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator/supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.

- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project.

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact me if you have any queries about the ethical review process, citing the SUHREC project number. Copies of clearance emails should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely

Keith Wilkins
Secretary, SUHREC

Keith Wilkins
Research Ethics Officer
Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
P O Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122
Tel +61 3 9214 5218
Fax +61 3 9214 5267
Appendix N

Ethics Adherence Statement

This is a statement testifying that I have adhered to all ethics clearance requirements.
Appendix O

Recruitment poster for the Australian Education Union E-magazine.

WorkCover Study: Participants Required

Government secondary school teachers required for a Master of Arts research study (Swinburne University of Technology).

I need ex or current government secondary school teachers who have made a WorkCover stress claim and would like to undertake a short face to face interview about their claims experience. All claims must be FINALIZED.

Anonymity, confidentiality and sensitivity will be assured. I'm an AEU member, a past WorkCover stress claimant and I aim to make changes to the policy.

Please contact me on 6990304@student.swin.edu.au

Many thanks,
Wendy