PhD Thesis

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Business School

TITLE:

An exploration into the nature and impact of anxiety in Senior Management Teams.

Submitted: 03 September 2009
DECLARATION

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made within the thesis itself.

Signed:

Heather Chisholme
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my children for their support, patience and understanding throughout the period of this research.

I would like to thank my partner of the last five years, Dr Antony Richards, for his encouragement and patience as I have engaged with my research and agonised in the writing of my thesis. Also to his late father John Richards who allowed me the use of his house to write my thesis in isolation. To my mother and late father, who continued to support my academic pursuits and take an active interest in all that I do. Without all of them, I would never have finished it.

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Dedicated to the memory of my son,
Matthew James Williams,
23 March 1990 to 7th June 2008.
‘He is the light that guides me, the smile that spurred me on.’
ABSTRACT

The aim of the research reported in this thesis was to explore the nature and impact of anxiety in Senior Management teams confronted by organisational change. There was a desire to move beyond an understanding of management from a tactical, systems or organizing perspective, to one which investigated the causes and reaction to emotion, in particular anxiety, and the implications for managers, groups and organizations. The research was limited to a focus on the causes, manifestations and exploration of individual and group anxiety.

The studies reported in this thesis have addressed two main research questions. First, what is the nature and impact of anxiety in senior management teams? Second, what are the effects of anxiety on learning and change within these teams? A multiple case study approach was used because this was seen as particularly beneficial for exploring the nature and impact of anxiety in senior management teams across a number of organizations. The nature of exploration necessitated an approach that was not bounded by a reliance on theories embedded in positivist approaches to scientific understanding, but rather required the development of individual and participatory group experiences through interpretation and constructivist enquiry.

Participants represented the senior management groups of each company and thus represented the controlling interests of the local businesses. There was evidence that participants in the study were experiencing anxiety during heightened periods of business change. The studies revealed how responses to anxiety resulted in a number of social defences against anxiety. The studies indicated that perceptions of
environmental emotional safety and identity with a leader affected the ability of managers to engage in reflective behaviours and collaborative approaches. Power and politics emerged as themes in the studies, with individuals struggling at times with notions of control, individual authority and understanding of the boundaries of power between participants. There were also implications for the impact of bounded rationality and learning acceptance.

The thesis is seen as a potential contribution towards a deeper understanding of a little researched area of anxiety in individual managers and in management groups, and the impact of anxiety on learning and change at individual, group and organizational levels. Thus, it may offer opportunities to contribute to a deeper understanding of the links between anxiety, learning and change on aspects of management and organizational learning. Developing a deeper understanding of the practice of management and its impact on the organization has the potential to assist the development of learning pathways which encounter these phenomena and engage with them in a didactic way by way of a point of optimal learning.

The Point of Optimal Learning is introduced in the literature review of the thesis where a potential gap in existing knowledge is identified. In this thesis it is proposed that there exists an opportunity in the learning of individuals to manage the tension between rational and emotional responses to events, creating moments of optimal learning as rational and emotional responses are kept in balance.
The interpretations emanating from how individual managers within senior management teams deal with change, and the implementation of collective awareness, has the potential to contribute towards an integrated understanding of the implementation and outcomes of organizational change. It is suggested that the exploration of such phenomena as group trust and openness; personal and institutional change; and confrontation of the inhibitors to change whether consciously or unconsciously constructed, have the potential to support a learning methodology which has implications for other organizations at a time of change. By exploring the causes of individual and organization resistance to change encountered in this research, practitioners may evolve an approach which builds upon the areas of understanding developed herein.

During the analysis phase of the research herein reported, three new models for interpreting the data, and a diagrammatic summary of the causes of management anxiety considered in the research, were developed and presented. They are: the anxiety causation diagram that informed the structured interview design.; the models developed for the purposes of data analysis and that were seen to extend prior models; and the development of a triangulation model that was seen to extend understanding beyond individual case phenomena. These models may be seen as contributing to different methodological approaches for future research, and thus may be seen to make a significant contribution to knowledge. The conclusion to the thesis discusses the implications for the action researcher, organizations and participants undergoing significant periods of change, and provides suggestions for further research.
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PART ONE

THE SITUATION AND ITS CONTEXT
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and thesis framework

1.0 Introduction

Management behaviour individually and in groups has been explored in a variety of forms, culminating in a number of somewhat diverse models about such behaviour (Antonacopoulou, 2006; Lemak, 2004). In light of the increasing number of associations, networks and relations existing intrinsically and extrinsically to organizations today, this thesis proposes that it is beneficial to examine management behaviour from a number of perspectives in order to understand these associations at individual, group and organizational level. Such examination is seen to be useful for understanding anxiety in senior management teams or groups.

Management groups may have difficulty in gaining a shared purpose, where tensions are obscured by a rather cosmetic sense of togetherness (Bourne & Walker, 2005; Brown, 2000; Obholzer & Roberts, 1999). As management groups collectively represent the controlling aspects of organizational contexts (Maclagan, 2007), it is imagined that notions of control are outward facing rather than actively engaged with and evaluated collectively (Brown, 2000; Clement, 1994; Smith, 2001). To a certain extent, control represents a number of dimensions of authority, legitimisation of identity, and the individual and collective struggle with the tension and anxiety control creates (Bacharach & Baratz, 1962; Hardy & Clegg, 1996).

It is suggested that there may be reluctance for some senior management teams and the individuals within them to address sources of tension and anxiety, which may create fundamental blockages to learning and change at a group, management and
organizational level (Butcher & Clarke, 1999; Gear, Vince, Read & Minkes, 2003; Herling, 2003). The literature contains a number of arguments wherein the authors tend to agree that the notion of organizational learning is tied to the notion of change in a mutually inclusive way (Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). Beer et al (2005) argue that in order for an organization to possess the capability to fit its strategy and its environmental challenges, leaders in the business ‘have to be open to learning’. However, whilst these are useful conceptual notions, there appears to be less clarity about how the individual experience impacts upon the ability of the group, and thereupon the organization, to realise the change espoused. This limitation seemed to indicate a plausible area for investigation.

The impact of organizational frameworks and the relationships of those within them also have the potential to heighten individual anxiety (Crane, 1980; Sullivan, 1955; Tams, 2008). Notions of self esteem, the potential conflict caused by power relationships, and the fear of negative responses or reprisals to work activities are some examples of the way anxiety can manifest itself at an individual level in contemporary working life (Baruch & Lambert, 2007; Tams, 2008).

Kets de Vries (1995) suggests that unwholesome responses to the causes of anxiety can impact on organizational performance. Thus, it may be argued that a failure to recognise and deal with the causes of anxiety and the potential impact on organizational outcomes may have serious consequences for businesses, as business leaders may struggle to identify the inhibitors to effective change management. Such ideas about anxiety inform the studies undertaken and reported in this thesis, as they examine the meanings given by individuals to work situations; how these meanings
are confronted and engaged with at group level; and finally, how the collective consciousness of what needs to be done is reflected in the dynamics of the organization itself.

The remainder of this chapter is structured in the following way. The section entitled *Background to the Research* frames the studies within the commercial conditions of each business in the first years of the millennium, together with the challenges confronting the organizations in three dissimilar, but contemporary, business environments. In addition, it seeks to explain the context of change and reasons stimulating the research in each study. It is reasoned that the primary focus of change emanating from the learning experiences of those who participated in the enquiry is most revealing when collective consciousness is raised, thus impacting upon group and organizational change. The *Overview of the Research* provides a synopsis of how the research was undertaken and contains information regarding data collection and the process of analysis. Finally, the *Outline of the Thesis* provides an overview of the thesis.

### 1.1 Background to the Research

The research reported within this thesis was conducted within three diverse businesses, each confronted with a cultural context of organizational change. The change was driven by many factors with different weightings relevant to each business. These factors included political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, legal and environmental conditions and are summarised for each company in Appendix 2. Inherent in the change process was a need to be able to respond to these factors in a cohesive manner. As many authors have identified, one of the greatest
challenges facing organizations today is the ability of their managers to successfully manage strategic change (Beer et al, 2005; Burnes, 2003; Kanter, 1997; Mullins, 2002; Peters, 1997). However, strategic change is fraught with difficulty and whilst theories of strategic change (Mintzberg, 1978; Pettigrew, 1985) acknowledge that occurrences can arise which disrupt the desired flow of strategic change intent, there appears to be little research to account for such disruption in detail (Beech & Johnson, 2005).

Whilst previous authors have cited the incremental nature of change (Baruch & Lambert, 2007; Tyson, 1992; Williams, 1994), they do not appear to capture adequately the individual and group experience, and the anxieties that heighten as the pace of change increases. Conventional views tend to support a view of rationally ordered and emotionally free work spaces which are reliable and predictably governed (Kerstin, 2001). The interface between managing change and learning new methods of practice in order to do so effectively, and recognition that anxiety is inherent within the learning process, has had little detailed examination (Baruch & Lambert 2007). It is proposed that change can only be successful when the collective has understood the desired outcome and is fully engaged in the process.

Individual connectivity to group and organizational perspectives rests on the principle of collective learning and reflection in action (Örtenblad, 2002; Vince, 2002a; Yoo, 2001). So what was seen to be required for understanding in this thesis was a perspective, starting with a new way of understanding the viewpoint of the individual as manager, which impacted upon the management group interface and thereafter, the
organization in general. Figure 1.1, designed for the purpose of this thesis, provides a conceptual overview of the research reported herein.

*Figure 1.1 Conceptual Overview of Research*

![Diagram of Conceptual Overview of Research](image)

Source: Developed for the purpose of this thesis.

Change was a constant influencer on each business, resulting in a need to reshape strategy in order to respond to the demands of change. This resulted in additional pressure on the top management team in each organization to respond to these
changes and drive them through the business. As shown in figure 1.1 under 'Individual Response' the reaction of such pressure and change requirements on individual managers may include anxiety, learning, social defences and reflexivity.

In management teams such reactions can result in a number of responses and associations highlighted in the 'Group Response' segment of figure 1.1. The associations may result in a questioning, or an avoidance of questioning, of assumptions; challenges to power relationships, or an attempt to drive democratic decision approaches as individuals align with others to support their particular view of the situation. It is imagined that negative reactions or associations may be heightened, as individuals confront the demands of the situation and their own reflections on what needs to be done.

The conceptual overview developed for the purpose of this thesis and informed by the literature review indicated that by pursuing a collective enquiry, and by moving towards a group response towards the drivers of change, management teams may better position themselves to evolve an ability to question assumptions. This may allow team members to challenge openly and explore the nature of power relations; to align themselves collectively, and individually, to actions required; and to allow for the realignment of goals. It is envisaged that such enquiry would promote an effective change platform towards the achievement of the change desired.

In order to address the impact of change on the individual manager, management group and organizational experience, an examination of the causes of anxiety and the resultant behaviours, both for the individual and the collective, was deemed
appropriate. A useful starting point is the business situation of each company under investigation and the resultant requirements for change. In the context of the three organizations studied, the drivers of change and the commercial conditions of each business are summarised for the purpose of this thesis, in brief in figure 1.2 below. The three organizations are given pseudonyms for the purposes of confidentiality and anonymity and are: a Medical Device Company (MDC); The Software Company (TSC); and a Professional Sound Equipment Company (PSEC).

**Figure 1.2 Commercial situation of three diverse US owned, UK businesses at the start of the New Millennium**

![Figure 1.2 Commercial situation of three diverse US owned, UK businesses at the start of the New Millennium](image)

**Source: Developed for the purpose of this thesis.**

Figure 1.2 represents the context of each company at a heightened period of change. Vulnerability is defined as the market situation and threat of competitive pressure in the market place, caused by erosion of market share or competitive advantage in the market. Opportunity is defined as the position of each company to embrace the
potential growth opportunities in the market place and of the need to develop emergent technologies and product offerings to capture market needs.

The Medical Device Company was profitable but was faced with high employee turnover (30%), erosion of gross margin through increased competition and product bundling, new technology innovations, regulatory pressure, and inconsistencies of approach between each division. The Biotechnology Software Company was breaking even. In general, employees were not leaving voluntarily but there was a constant drive for downsizing year on year; product time to market was shortening; management approaches were reactive and often lacked strategic focus; top management had high employee turnover; and the market was static and facing a reduction in value, rather than opportunity. The Professional Sound Equipment Company was profitable, with access to potentially enormous parent company investment (parent company worth over 8 billion USD with significant cash reserves); confronted with a stable business; an aging employee demographic; a need to move from analogue to digital technology; the need to capture new market; skills shortages in new technology areas; strong parental company control; and a need to move quickly in a growing and competitive professional sound market.

The drivers for change were both compelling and essential if each company was to increase its position and profitability in the marketplace; ultimately change was about business survival.
1.2 Overview of the Research

The research takes the form of a participatory action research enquiry. It merges a number of models from different schools of thought in what Reason and Marshall (2001) describe as a creative adaptation of the general ideologies and investigatory approaches which can be tailored creatively to tackle different research issues. Further, Guba and Lincoln (2005) describe such an approach as interconnecting a number of perspectives in order to allow for the assimilation of multiple points of view.

The key to understanding in the research herein reported is the social construction of the teams examined against a methodological framework that is seen to be flexible enough to make sense of the themes emerging from the enquiry; and to account for the meaning, values and interpretations tendered by individuals within group contexts. As such, each study is designed using the multiple sources and techniques available to inform the investigation.

Action research is a term used to describe a number of approaches involved in organizational interventions which have the purpose to change that organization in some way, or indeed, evolve a new way of thinking due to advancing knowledge. However, there are many approaches associated with the term and it can be a confusing field (Argyris & Schön, 1991; Eden & Huxham, 2006; Raelin, 1997). In the studies herein reported the Action Research model befits the case study approach to the research subject because it involves the researcher in activities with other members of the organization in actions which are of legitimate interest to them and over which they aim to take action (following Eden & Huxham, 2006).
The effectiveness of action research as a legitimate investigatory approach is intrinsically linked to the inter-relationships between and within the individual, group and organizational context. As Raelin (1999) states, to eliminate researcher interference in this mode of investigation, the researcher must operate as part of the group dynamic and focus also on data and self-learning, as a practicing manager. Each case study was designed with the aforementioned understandings in mind and utilising a qualitative approach to data gathering and analysis to inform the studies.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part One encompasses Chapters 1 to 3 and includes an introductory chapter; provides the literature reviewed which informed the studies; outlines the conceptual framework of the studies and provides information about each organization studied, together with a brief introduction to each participant in the studies. Part Two is concerned with the context of the studies and encompasses Chapters 4 to 6. Part Two includes the context of the research; aspects of data treatment and the analysis and findings of the studies. Part Three centres on the discovery and meaning emanating from the studies and encompasses Chapters 7 and 8. These Chapters draw together the major findings of the studies; suggest implications for individuals and organizations; and suggest further development of the approach. Each of the chapters are summarised briefly below in order to provide an overall context for the reader.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

This chapter provides the foundation for the studies based on concepts of how anxiety manifests itself in the learning process, particularly at times of heightened change.
The linkage between anxiety and traditional concepts of management and organizational learning are explored. The chapter concludes by examining the opportunity that collective experiences contribute to a more informed approach to organizational change and learning.

Chapter Three - Conceptual Framework

This chapter outlines the conceptual framework of the studies and restates the Research Questions. The chapter outlines the benefits of the case study approach, the appropriateness of action research and participatory approaches, and ethical considerations. The role of the researcher in participatory enquiry is outlined, together with considerations and risks associated with an active participant researcher. Definitions of terms to be used are also provided.

PART TWO - Data Approach and Analysis

A brief overview is provided of how each of the analytical chapters 4 to 6 are structured. Links to previous literature are referenced for consistency of interpretation.

Chapter Four – Data Collection and Analysis

This chapter outlines the approach to data collection, its analysis and the use of triangulation methodology. A new model referring to data triangulation is introduced which builds on previous research and offer opportunities for further research activity.
Chapter Five - Issues for Consideration

This chapter provides a review of the Issues of Validity, Reliability and Ethical considerations. It introduces a new Data Analysis Model and explores aspects of data treatment in the process of analytical enquiry.

Chapter Six - Case Study Analysis

Each case study is detailed in full and increases the process of discovery, reflecting and building upon the literature reviewed as part of this research.

PART THREE: Discovery and Meaning

This section deals with the interpretation of the findings and covers chapters 7 and 8; the meaning and linkage to the Research Questions; the conclusions to be drawn from these interpretations; and the benefits to individuals and organizations are suggested.

Chapter Seven – Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together the findings of each study herein reported in relation to the Research Questions.

Chapter Eight – Conclusions to the Research

The individual study interpretations are drawn together here after triangulation to explore the interconnections of manager experience, in particular as it relates to the implications of anxiety and change. This chapter also considers the limitations of the research herein reported and the opportunities for future research.
CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the notions of management and organizational learning will be explored, together with how the definitions adopted in the studies herein reported have informed the approach to the studies. This chapter is split into three sections. The first section summarises the literature pertaining to notions of anxiety and the struggle for managers to learn from experience. The second section explores management learning, organizational learning, reflective learning and change, indicating how this literature informs the research studies herein reported. In the third section, key concepts of the collective mind and notions of collective learning are examined.

In each of these sections, the literature is explored in a critically analytical way. This is for two reasons. The first is to demonstrate a depth of understanding of the literature. The second is to relate to how that understanding informs the Research Questions: What is the nature and impact of anxiety in senior management teams? What are the effects of anxiety on learning and change within these teams? and the studies undertaken to address those questions.

2.1 Notions of Anxiety

The term anxiety stems from the translation of Freud's (1936) 'angst' which describes the combination of negative affect and physiological arousal. This combination means that anxiety is a defence mechanism which serves to protect individuals from threats to their survival (Baruch & Lambert, 2007; Ohman, 2000). The amalgamation of negative affect and physiological arousal can manifest itself in various degrees of
reaction. Individuals evolve a set of belief systems which become established through
time and embody a set of complex behaviours which can lead to hypersensitivity to
certain stimuli (Carlisle, 2002; Hallam, 1992; Kennerley, 1995; Sheehan, 2008).
Individual belief systems become conditioned over a period and trigger coping
strategies which may have proven beneficial in previous situations. Constant exposure
to such stimuli can result in individual reactions to anxiety which extend from
disagreeable feelings of tension, worry and nervousness, to loss of concentration,
appetite, sexual function, and sleep. Physiological associations with irregular
heartbeats, high blood pressure and muscular skeletal difficulties have also been
identified (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Anxiety is a term often used in conjunction with fear with which it is frequently
confused. Although fear and anxiety exist on the same continuum, there are
differences in the two states which may be best explained through the associations
with present and potential danger (Catherall, 2003). It may be argued that fear relates
to a conditioned response to an actual or perceived threat, which is associated with
terror as a response to occurring events. The proximity of threat is a useful way to
delineate between the two constructs. Anxiety arises when individuals consider
consciously the prevalence of a perceived threat in the future. Anxiety denotes the
possibility of a threat arising. The threat may or may not happen but it is plausible that
the individual still has the opportunity to control it. Fear on the other hand, is
responding directly to sensory perceptions in the immediate experience (Blanchard et
al, 2002; Catherall, 2003).
As presented in this thesis, notions of anxiety started as a mind map on a large flip chart sheet which developed into a set of interlocking connections and associations with anxiety causation, manifestations, reactions to and solutions, as shown in Figure 2.1. The literature review was in part shaped by, and informed, the development of new associations and connections in the mind map. Not all aspects of Figure 2.1 were explored fully in the case studies herein reported, but they may present additional areas for future research. Notions of anxiety involve a complex system of responses to emerging situations and the sections which follow explain the literature associated with the aspects relevant to the studies reported in this thesis.

**Figure 2.1 Mind Mapping Anxiety Causation in Management Teams**

![Mind Map of Anxiety Causation in Management Teams](source)

*Source: Developed for the purpose of this thesis*
2.1.1 Themes of Anxiety and the Struggle to Learn from Experience

Many emotions are triggered by the impact of organizational change and can range through a number of emotional responses such as from fear to excitement, from anger to pleasure, from eagerness to distrust (French, 2001). Change evokes many responses at a human level. It is suggested that such responses have the potential to impact upon the effectiveness of adoption of change requirements. Change by its nature stimulates uncertainty, and anxiety may result as the fear of change processes may be realised (Baruch & Lambert, 2007; Espedal, 2006; Jick & Peiperl, 2003).

In organizational terms, the approach to dealing with anxiety seems to subsist with the ability of the environment to create safe harbour in which to deal with the issues; and with the individual to be able to conduct an honest dialogue with themselves and others about the situation (Catherall, 2003; Kahn, 1990; Stacey, 1996). This approach would be understood in clinical situations but in organizational terms, there exists a lack of appreciation of the importance of dealing with this area of human behaviour (Kets de Vries, 2004). It is arguable that the day to day activities of organizations create ‘symbiotic’ (Crane, 1980:208) relationships between its members. When organizations are in a state of stability, potential sources of anxiety are largely predictable and thus members have an identity and familiarity with the likely responses to those stimuli. When organizations are in a state of change, however, the predictability of events becomes more difficult to manage and thus anxiety may escalate (Antonocopoulou & Chiva, 2007; Beech & Johnson, 2005; Huxham, 2003; Sillince, 2006; Vangen & Kets de Vries, 2004; Vince, 2006).
In this way, individuals may unconsciously utilise established habitual defence mechanisms against the changes they encounter in order to protect themselves from the feelings of anxiety that change may cause (Bourne & Walker, 2005; Bovey & Hede, 2001; Diamond et al, 2004; Lambert, 2007; Trist, 1999). Such protective mechanisms may focus activities on creating stability as a defence against anxiety (Ashforth et al, 2000; Chattopadhyay, 1999; Jarret & Kellner, 1996; Kreiner et al, 2006; Simpson, 2007). Creating stability may mean forging alliances with those considered to be trustworthy within the organization. Trustworthiness in this context may be defined as a belief in the ability of others to uphold a commitment, to be honest and to act without a detriment to others (following Cummings & Bromiley, 1996).

Within the literature on interpersonal trust, there are strong indicators that such trust generates certain behaviours of cooperation, information sharing and positive outcomes (Borgelt & Falk, 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Ferrin et al, 2007; Woolthius et al, 2005;). The implication of trust in the adaptation to organizational demands, including acceptance of change and the adoption of organizational citizenship at an individual level is also connected to the trust that others have in figures of authority in organizations (Boethius, 1999; Granstrom, 1996; Jarret & Kelner, 1996; Shamir & Lapidot, 2003). Thus interpersonal trust can be influenced either negatively or positively by associations of trust in superiors (Billows, 2004; Endaba, 2008; Ligon et al, 2008; Roberts, 1999). Following scandals in organizations such as Enron in 2001, trustworthiness of business executives has been an area of management and regulatory focus. It appears that both systemic and interpersonal levels of trust are interrelated (Dirks & Ferrin, 2007; Elengovan et al, 2007; Ferrin et al, 2007; Grey & Garsten,
2001; Rousseau et al, 1998) as it is considered that systemic and interpersonal trust relations are part of the whole system of work. It appears plausible, therefore, that failure in either can manifest itself in negative organizational consequences.

Trust in the system of work infers that systemic conflicts may emanate from the task one is assigned (O’Reilly, Williams & Barsade, 1998) and typically originate from a disagreement amongst group members regarding the content of decision making in terms of individual viewpoints, opinions or information. Relationship conflict manifests itself from a distrust of others and sits at an emotional level, involving annoyance or animosity amongst group members (following Simons & Peterson, 2000). It is this latter aspect of relationship which arguably increases stress and anxiety in individuals (Baron, 1991; Cosner, 2009; Jehn & Mannix, 1997) as this has the potential to be detrimental to the quality of decision making and intra-group alignment.

However, notions of trust also have been referred to as a highly complex form of social relationships and thus definitions are frequently challenged amongst academics (Reed, 2001). There is an interrelatedness of notions of trust at an interpersonal, a systemic, a relational, organizational and cross organizational level (Fineman, 2007). Such understanding has prompted a call for research which exists at a number of levels and which embraces the manifestations of trust in organizations wherever it is indicative of individual, inter-group or wider relations (Costa & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007). The research herein reported utilises these notions to explore and understand the causes of anxiety within and between the case studies examined by understanding the individual and the team causation of, and responses to, anxiety.
Management typically has a tendency to ignore and neglect the human dimension when implementing change (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Kets De Vries, 2004; 2007; Levine, 1997). This is particularly concerning when the impact of anxiety and the resultant defence behaviours have been claimed to influence resistance to organizational change (de Board, 1983; Bovey & Hede, 2001; Hirschhorn, 1988; Hyde, 2006; Kets de Vries, 2007; Putnam & Boys, 2006).

Resistance to change is typified by a set of largely unconscious responses to change such as humour, projection of negativity onto others, perception of threat (real or imagined), avoidance, withdrawal, conflict, resentment, pairing, denial and changing the subject (Bourne & Walker, 2005; Bovey & Hede, 2001; Chreim, 2006; Esquivel & Kleiner, 1997; Fleming & Sewell, 2003; Gabriel, 1999; Kets de Vries, 2007; Putnam & Boys, 2006; Vince, 2006). Managing change in this context stems from developing understanding, of self, of others, of context, of structure and of power and politics (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Hader, 2007; Tajfel, 1972; 1978; McHugh, 1997; Olson & Eoyang, 2001). Notions of power and politics, and their relationship to anxiety, therefore, was seen as worthy of exploration.

2.1.2 Power and Politics in Organizations

In order to study anxiety it was considered useful to examine the topic of power relationships that exist within organizations and the related topic of politics. Clement (1994) states that whilst this aspect has been largely ignored in previous studies, there is an appreciation that power and politics is central to any change management process. Power and politics have been viewed as discrete activities. Power is typically defined as the inferred potential of one person to cause another person to act in
accordance with their wishes or to act upon the organizational structure (Obholzer, 1999; O’Doherty & Willmott, 2001; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2001). Politics refers to the processes whereby differentiated but interdependent individuals or interest teams use whatever power they can amass to influence goals, criteria, or processes used in organizational decision making to advance their own interests (Miles, 1980).

Fundamental notions of power and politics in terms of applications in social settings are significant to the experience of work (French & Vince, 1999). The concept of power strikes at the heart of the emotional component of organizational life and seems contrary to the notion that there exists stability in organizational frameworks. As Clement (1994:36) states, ‘excluding power as a topic of discussion assures the general public...that decision making in organizations was based on efficiency and logic’. Efficiency and logic denotes an ordered environment which indicates a business concept based on rationality and control. Such control is typified by a strong leader or leaders which reinforce it, maintains Vince (2002), because organizations are typically individually orientated. Vince suggests that collective voice is less tractable to control and can easily undermine what is in practice an established pattern of power associations. However, power may well be used to prevent conflict emerging in the organization when it is used to gain consensus and acquiescence in exploring the collective consciousness (Cosner, 2009; Fox, 1973; Mills, 1956; Martin, 1992; Simon & Peterson, 2000).

Managers may need to evolve an ability to manage skilfully the tension between stability and instability as new scenarios are realised and adapted (Pettigrew, 1985). In this context, as the system is organized, there exists a continuous tension between the...
desire for control and the desire for collaboration. Vince (2002) calls this tension the struggle between control and democracy. However, the word democracy conjures an image of government with elected representatives of the people. In the work context, the process of management is not usually a democratic process. Management choose managers and the concept of elected leadership is not universally embedded in organizations. Instead, it is proposed that what is needed is an evolution of workers addressing organizational issues in collaboration with management, and development of group working beyond management teams towards a coherent whole, more characteristic of the Gestalt or wholeness of its collective parts (Gustavsson & Harung, 1994).

The notion of democracy also raises issues of compliance with political associations, power and authority. The links with management roles are clear; compliance is an important association as usage of power is legitimised for the greater good of the system in which it operates (Braynion, 2004). Relational theories of power examine the relative influence that one group has over another and as such, the extent of dependence for goal achievement or problem solving (Wolfe & McGinn, 2005). In contrast, earlier writers like Kanter (1977) consider power from the perspective of the person who influences and thus how an individual’s situation within an organization can affect the degree of influence over another. This has the potential to affect the person’s self identity as social connections in terms of relationship between others have the potential to redefine individual identity. Such redefinition may cause anxiety as individuals may conform to expectations but this may cause negative feelings to arise (Foucault, 1972; Ybema et al, 2009). Interpersonal exchange in terms of influence, dependency, autonomy and political contingency leads us to consider the
implication of social exchange theory as a brief subset of a discussion on power and politics.

Social exchange theory considers power from the perspective of two parties and how perceptions of relative dependency lead to relative influence within the relationship (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1962). Power it seems is multifaceted and therefore its inherent complexity may be considered as such when examining and interpreting the relative dependency between individuals and teams in the research setting. Thus, in the studies herein reported, power is considered from a number of perspectives gained from several levels of interpretation; individual, group and organizational. Self identity and identity with others as this relates to expectation at these levels of interpretation may be useful indicators of anxiety causation, particularly as this informs the notion of management in organizations today (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Knight & Willmott, 1989; Tajfel, 1972; 1978).

There appear to be a number of associated and paradoxical considerations in the notion of management and the enactment of authority in action in contemporary organizations. Neumann (1999) describes a combination of participatory methods of change to create both anxiety and mechanisms for political activity. She recognises, however, that politics are a necessity to organizational change because political transformation impacts upon the beliefs, usually deeply held by members of organizations, in relation to authority, rank, power and assets (Neumann, 1999).

Vince (2002) usefully suggests that managers use politics to espouse notions such as empowerment, self managed work groups and quality circles and that they also adopt
the Japanese concepts of worker integration in problem solving approaches. Concurrently, however, there is recognition of the limits of employee control and the drive towards empowerment, as such activities by work groups are usually designed to address a particular problem within the system (Hill & Huq, 2004; Wilkinson, 1997).

Butcher and Clarke (1999) identify that it is not surprising that stakeholders use politics to ensure that their influence in the organization is not only aligned to their motivation but also responded to in a tractable manner. They question the viability of negative associations with political interests in a context which legitimises political associations in the action of doing. However, the diversity of such motivations is not always in alignment with the aforementioned notions of business unity and sense of group. Organizational politics have emotive associations and appear to strike at the heart of notions of trust and concord (Foucault, 1977; Putnam, 1993). These ideas are often connected to individual stances within management teams which are seen to be self-serving or associated with a negative use of power.

Thus, recognition of political alliances forged in the action of managing should be acknowledged. Differences exist in organizational contexts and political associations can be positively aligned if engaged with, explored and understood by the collective. These concepts are engaged with as part of the process of understanding the causes of anxiety within the studies examined and reported in this thesis. Exploring notions of authority, control, political associations and agendas is integral to the research design and research approach herein reported.
As Berry and Cartwright (2000) explain, the evolution of management and organizational learning requires a step away from the functional to include attention to the community, the organizational experience and the tasks and behaviours of management. Such approaches necessarily evoke a loss of control or power in a system which identifies itself, at least in the marketplace, as one which embodies boundaries which are realised, effective and impacting on the collective consciousness. Organizationally then, management teams will learn to be able to evolve a better appreciation of political interests in order to deliver organizational change which benefits all.

What is interesting throughout the reading of power and its associated aspect of politics is that there appears to have been limited exploration of these aspects in management research. Huzzard (2004) tries to redress the balance in what he describes as reconciliation between learning and power relations in situated learning theory. Huzzard (2004) centres on a focus on learning through exploration in projects, rather than learning through what he terms an experiential approach towards everyday activities. For social constructivists, the shared meanings that arise from reflection in action are part of an experiential learning framework.

Power in this experience becomes a moderator of the interpretations given to the sense that is made from experience. In situated learning theory approaches, power acts as a filter that can 'make or break' the sense of the experience. Huzzard's argument is a useful conceptual work, but there appears to be no experiential practice by which it is informed. Huzzard raises the issue that power and politics should be addressed in research but tackles it from quite a narrow perspective. Neither does he address the
apparent difficulty of encountering power and politics unleashed through experience, and thus an understanding of the negative effects of such encounters should they occur in a learning process. Such an understanding informs the research herein reported.

The tensions between encountering the manifestations of power and political associations, and the realisation of what is happening within the organizations studied, requires a methodological approach which allows for the airing of views without heightening anxiety. The learning process itself has the potential to cause anxiety in individuals because of the need to learn and the pressures from their organizations to embark on learning activities (Antonacopoulou, 2006; Griffiths, Winstanley & Gabriel, 2005; Sheehan, 2000). Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005) suggest that where the right emotional climate is created to air such pressures, learning can be enhanced. In the studies herein reported, this was managed through collective engagement with emergent themes, emanating from individual structured interview analysis and general observation.

Finally, the author was conscious of the power dynamics of the researcher relationship in the research process. Not only was the researcher a Senior Manager of the companies examined, but also risked dominating how understandings can be constructed in the group experience. Even though relations could be constructed in a reciprocal manner, there was an importance that the voice of the participants was heard and their activities facilitated. Reciprocity (Fine et al, 2000) in this case was not just about political understanding but about the movement of focus from the researcher as ‘self’ and onto the participants in the research as ‘other’, towards a
gestalt experience or common consciousness of all the research participants (Bishop, 2005). The tractability of the notion of researcher acting as a voice for 'Other' shall be explored further in part three of this thesis.

Critically, the studies herein reported seek to understand the phenomenon of power and politics on organizational life and in particular on anxiety, learning and change. As Hardy and Clegg (2006) point out, this is an area that few studies have sought to address. Power can be reinforced or changed through the collective experience which is often less obedient to attempts at control.

2.1.3 Social Defences as a Response to Anxiety

Social defences are a system of largely unconscious relationships in the organization of work and organizational structures which exist to defend existing characteristics of working practice (Vince, 2002b). Social defences emerge when there is reliance on established routines and structures; for example, rules, regulations and procedures; or on characteristic rationalisation of experience. Social defences against anxiety imply a system of largely unconscious relationships that exist within the system of work and the structure of the organization. These relationships ensure that the social system embraces mechanisms to protect members from feelings of anxiety (Diamond et al, 2004; Stacey, 2003).

When social defences are allowed to dominate, the organization may prove to be dysfunctional as individual members become detached from the experience of work (Heen, 2005; Hyde and Thomas, 2002; Jacques, 1953; Menzies, 1960; Weinbach, 1984). Thus individuals, teams and ultimately the organization (as an embodiment of
the body collective), tend to become purely rational, ignoring the emotional, relational and the political aspect of the work experience (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Cosner, 2009; Gargiulo & Benassi, 1991; Steier, 1989). The difficulty with this approach is that organizational defences are ‘ultimately self defeating’ (Hyde & Thomas, 2002:409).

The interesting dichotomy regarding social defence phenomenon is that social defence behaviours can often hinder the processes which serve to recognize and deal with these behaviours. Menzies (1960), in her study of nursing staff, found that the distribution of task ownership amongst all grades of nursing staff in an effort to remove the weight of responsibility on certain individuals, resulted in upward task delegation. Nurses became defensive against the possibility of criticism and the fear of patient harm, and protected themselves against such possibilities by delegating upwardly, asking their supervisors to undertake even minor tasks. This action had the consequence of increasing anxiety for both nurses and supervisors as each encountered difficulties in embracing the new processes.

As social defences are developed unconsciously by members of the organization it can affect the capability of managers and organizations to learn. Trist (1981) describes the compartmentalization of social defence behaviours as system domain defences. These domains act to deny differences between organizational stakeholders and task requirements. Similarly, Obholzer and Roberts (1994) found analogous phenomenon in the human services. They state that the presence of these defences come to be seen as the optimal way of performing tasks and become beyond question, regardless of the implications for change affectivity.
Thus, it would appear that the impact of anxiety on individuals, teams and organizations is much to do with the perceived coherent identity of the organization in which it operates (Brown & Humphreys, 2003; Esquival & Kleiner, 1997; Greenwood and Hinings, 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Ybema et al, 2009). It was stated previously that we operate in an era of fundamental change and organizations are constantly evolving ways to deal with this change as an essential requirement of contemporary business environments. There appears to be a benefit, therefore, of both managers and organizations considering the hidden and unconscious phenomenon that manifests itself in these social defence rituals. It is envisaged that only through recognizing these aspects and responding to them that management and organizations can learn effectively (Antonacopoulou, 2006; Bain, 1998).

Bain (1998) states that all organizations build socially constructed defences against the anxiety which is aroused through carrying out the primary task of the organization. These defences are evident in the structures, policies, procedures, information systems, human resource systems and culture of the organization. More simply put ‘it is the gap between what the organization says it is doing and what it is actually doing’ (Bain 1998:414). Social defences become part of the organizational ritual (Hardy & Clegg, 2006; O’Reilly & Tuchman, 2004).

The concept of social defence rituals has been reflected in the work of Hirschhorn (2000) who, in referring to the work of Bion (1959), suggests three modes of social defence: basic assumption, covert coalition and organizational ritual. The following definitions of these modes may be useful considerations in exploring the phenomena of social defence rituals in practice. Basic assumption reflects patterns of group
behaviour based on a perception of an intrinsic and cohesive group mind existing. When anxiety is present, these basic assumptions will allow group members to limit any feelings of isolation and depersonalization. Basic assumptions take a number of forms and appear to center on three premises of why the group has been drawn together: a) to fight or to flee from an enemy; (b) to be dependent on a powerful leader; and (c) to oversee the marriage of a pair who will produce a powerful saviour or messiah. Covert coalition controls anxiety through a more durable and sustainable set of relationships. Organizational ritual is impersonal in character and externalized in a set of mandated actions like a ‘dress code’ or policies and procedures.

The way individuals deal with these basic assumptions may invoke a response exemplified by Hirschhorn’s (1985) model shown in Figure 2.2 below. The model indicates that there may exist two competing processes. On the one hand the members focus on task achievement, with the authority to act, and with a supportive structural environment to achieve that task and focus on the work activity. On the other hand the risk associated with the activity could be perceived to be high, causing inherent anxieties and the creation of additional social defence behaviours.
Overcoming these modes of social defence is a key consideration of the research design utilized for the purpose of this thesis. Such a consideration is necessary in order to support the focus of evolving the Point of Optimal Learning experience by balancing the emotional experience with that of the rational (see figure 2.5, page 46).

2.1.4 Social Defences: Effect on Management and Organizational Learning

Section 2.1.3 represents a quintessential dichotomy of management and organizations. Organizations espouse their desire to improve continuously and change but they often prevent themselves from embracing these opportunities as a result of the social defence mechanisms established. Individual managers reflect and re-create the defences of the organization (French & Vince, 1999) which inevitably inhibits learning and reinforces the social defences, which serve to defend against inherent anxiety. So almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy, organizations create barriers to
progress by not tackling the anxiety that exists. These barriers inhibit the very change they desire and affirm any negativity about the effectiveness of the change. Jacques (1955) identified that these defences permit management to avoid psychotic anxieties. Whilst these words might seem to be extreme, what is significant is the implicit assumption that management, in negating the underpinning anxieties, inhibit change processes. As Bain (1998) suggests, learning adoption whether as an individual, a group, or an organization, requires giving up what is known. The act of ‘giving up’ may provoke anxiety.

Anxiety is often not addressed in formal management training activities, although there is widespread acknowledgement that anxiety is always present in management and change dynamics (Argyris, 1994; French & Vince, 1999; Gilmore & Krantz, 1990; Hochschild, 1983). However, as Broussine, Gray and Kirk (1998:62) state, management training does not provide the “time and emotional space for the expression of working through of anxiety in the ‘here and now’ of programmes.” Clearly inner anxieties would then pervade the organization and become part of organizations defences (Hirschhorn, 1988; Simpson, 2001).

Senge’s 1992 ideas regarding the notion of the ‘learning organization’ introduce five disciplines which combine to create the learning organization. These disciplines are: systems thinking; personal mastery; mental models; building shared vision; and team learning. Whilst these notions informed management thinking in the 1990’s, Bain (1998) suggests that they fail to address the unconscious and the anxious. As Bain (1998:414) states; “the five disciplines seem to be ‘fair weather’ tools; changing the world of maladaptive social defences requires something much stronger”. So
historically at least, many individual and organizational learning approaches have failed to recognize that anxiety, if unexplored, can hinder the development that they espouse because of inherent unconscious dynamics existing within organizations.

Kets de Vries (2004) highlighted the significance of the unconscious dynamics on organizational life. Building on the work of Bion (1959), Jacques (1974) and Pfeffer (1998), Kets de Vries comments on the popular belief on organizations historically that it is only what is seen and known that is important, that conscious phenomena dictate conscious responses. What should not be ignored is that human beings are not machines. Organizations often fail to bring the emotional component of work life to the foreground. Usually, this is because emotional responses have negative connotations, removing that which is rational and logical, and therefore orderly, in organizational life.

However, it is sometimes paradoxical that businesses fail to address the emotional component of the human psyche as every business is an amalgam of the sum of its parts. Each part is represented by a person with hopes, aspirations and fears. Exploring the latter aspects of human experience, however, is difficult and negates the projected image of business rationality and logic. It is not conducive to notions of business order and control to open somewhat of a Pandora’s Box of human emotion in a context that is not comfortable with its exploration. An indication of the importance of this understanding in contemporary business is highlighted by the increasing calls for interventions by organizations in tackling the thorny subject of stress related illness (van der Klink, Blonk, Schene, van Dijk, 2001). The paradox exists because we continue to deny the presence of an unconscious process at a conscious level, but
are required to develop an intervention to ameliorate the impact of stress stimuli on individuals at work.

Kets de Vries (2004; 2007) suggests that unconscious dynamics have a significant impact on life in organizations and indicates that by tackling the social defences that are manifest in the system of work (at individual, group and organizational level of analysis) organizational relationships may be improved. Moving beyond the psychoanalytical aspects of this approach, there is some evidence that businesses are starting to appreciate the impact that emotional aspects have on organizational life. Some businesses have introduced employee assistance programmes to provide some support for stress related issues. However, these are largely reactive, failing to deal with or encounter the embedded organizational reality of the individual experience. The studies herein reported seek to explore the causes of social defence behaviour at the individual manager, management group and organizational level of analysis as a way of deepening understanding of this phenomenon.

2.1.5 Anxiety, Defensiveness and the Struggle to Learn from Experience

Faced with addressing the anxieties that exist 'through the looking glass' of social defence recognition, it is proffered that managers would experience additional anxiety. It was previously stated that the management of change is inseparably bound to the management of anxiety, so in order to facilitate the learning process one must be able to address and deal with the underlying anxiety.

Paradoxically, management training frequently conceals the interpersonal dimension by offering a set of techniques and methods by which managers can avoid the
interpersonal area. Thus, management training creates its own social defense ritual as it is both a container for the anxiety, and denies its existence. Ways forward have been suggested.

Blumberg and Golembiewski (1976) have emphasized the importance of experiential group settings in order to facilitate the legitimization of emotion as appropriate material for examination. This assertion is supported by Talbot (1997) who cites the dangers of failing to deal with the paradoxes which exist in management development forums. Talbot (1997:145) states that “Paradoxes can lead to creative tensions or destructive conflict, depending on how they are managed. For tensions to be managed, they have first to be recognized for what they are”. Talbot presents an experiential learning model which develops the Kolb (1994) learning cycle further. Many writers on organizational learning have referenced Kolb (Dixon, 1999; Handy, 1994; Kemmis & McTaggart 2005; Pedlar, 1991; Race, 1993; Sheehan, 2000; Talbot, 1997) and are consistent in their view that the learning cycle captures the essence of experiential learning.

Kolb’s (1994) four stage theory is based on a model with two dimensions. The first dimension, as shown in the model below in Figure 2.3, runs horizontally and is based on task. The left end of the dimension is doing the tasks (active experimentation), while the right end is watching and reflecting on the task (reflective observation). The second dimension runs vertically and is based upon our cognitive and emotional processes. The top of the dimension is feeling through concrete experience, whilst the bottom of the dimension is thinking (abstract conceptualisation).
The two lines in the centre of the diagram intersect each other and form four quadrants (represented by the orange circles in the diagram below). These quadrants form the personal learning styles. **Theorists** (or Assimilator) like to learn using abstract conceptualization and reflective observation. **Pragmatists** (or Converger) like to learn using abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. **Activists** (or accommodator) like to learn using active experimentation and concrete experience. **Reflectors** (or Diverger) like to learn using concrete experience and reflective observation. Kolb emphasized that individuals learn using all four quadrants, but they tend to favour one over the others. The ideal training environment would include activities for each of the four processes. For example, the cycle might begin with the learner’s personal involvement through concrete experiences; next, the learner reflects on this experience, looking for meaning; then the learner applies this meaning to form a logical conclusion; and finally, the learner experiments with similar problems, which result in new concrete experiences. The learning cycle might begin anew due to new and different experiences.
The cycle is useful in the way that it expresses the manner in which individuals can learn effectively as in its purest form it gives the process to manage the conversion of experience into knowledge (Coghlan, 2009; de Jong, 2006; Huxham & Vaugen, 2000; Kolb, 1994). Nevertheless, the implications of anxiety awareness within the cycle are not clearly determined, although one would assume that the process of experience allows individuals utilizing the Kolb cycle to challenge the anxiety and learn to manage within its paradigm. This is not clear in the literature and the focus rather is on the experience of managing and thus is laden with task centered variances.
It has been stated that it is important to confront individual anxiety. As Heimer and Vince (1998) have revealed, in order to sustain learning and change, one must also recognize and confront the strategic importance of emotional and relational perspectives on the development of teams. It has been suggested that all learning and change creates anxieties (Schein, 1993) but anxiety is heightened at the times of 'strategic moment' where it could be worked through in order to uncover a more insightful approach to the matter (Vince & Martin, 1993), as shown below in figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4 Anxiety as a Strategic Moment

The figure illustrates the two directions in which teams can travel at the point of anxiety. On the left, learning is promoted and this can encourage risks to be taken. The risk and the great effort required to embrace it can lead to new insights and knowledge. In the right hand cycle, learning is discouraged and it can promote the avoidance or denial that such emotions exist. Thus, the potential to learn is ignored willingly. Hence, the notion of learning from anxiety has a strategic component as it may equally promote or discourage learning and change (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel,
Therefore, while sustainable learning through the defensive mechanisms is fraught with difficulty, it is argued that the interests of management and organizational learning would be better served in this way.

Vince and Martin's approach offers a way of exploring anxiety to realize an epiphany of experience, an opportunity to experience a new insight, to develop meaning and promote self efficacy. Whilst the model offers a compelling view of anxiety as a strategic moment, there still subsists the interplay of a complex array of emotions which may hamper the individual's capability to gain control of what is happening to them. Anxiety at its most pronounced has the potential to disable the individual's capability of moving towards the left hand side of the model shown in figure 2.4 (following Baruch & Lambert, 2007). Thus, it may be feasible that the opportunity for experiential learning in the midst of anxiety can only be realized when the individual has the capability to invoke a rational control of such emotional factors. This aspect will be explored further in this thesis and introduced on page 46, as the Point of Optimal Learning.

2.1.6 Summary of Section

In this section it has been reasoned that dealing with the emotional effects of change, as triggers of anxiety, is an essential issue within contemporary organizations. Managers will require the skills to manage the tensions created between stability and instability as change takes shape. Notions of trust and its role in the creation of anxiety were explored. In addition, notions of power and politics within the framework of work require sensitive approaches which create a safe harbour for exploration and evaluation of such issues. Power and politics, coupled with notions of
authority in organizations have been considered as the struggle between power and collaboration was realized. Inherent paradoxes in the system of managing were identified and explained within the context of learning and change. Such paradoxes entailed the conscious evaluation of existing social defence mechanisms and habitual barriers against anxiety that exist within the framework of work.

The evolution of management and organizational learning requires attention to the societal, the organization and the tasks and behaviours of management. Notions of control, stakeholder expectation and the anxiety which may manifest with loss of control or power in a system which is undergoing change were discovered to impact the collective consciousness. These notions informed the research design as the studies herein reported sought to discover whether causes of anxiety in senior management teams link to these aspects. The role of researcher and the power relations that create additional power dynamics to the researcher as 'manager participant', together with a consideration of researcher as 'research authority', have also been encountered.

Management and organizational learning have been reasoned to be inevitably linked to the anxieties that materialize as managers become aware of the conscious and unconscious. Such linkages may either be rejected as managers willingly avoid the anxiety they feel, or embraced in an effort to lead to new insights and knowledge.

This section considered the need for individual learning to stretch beyond comfort zones to a degree sufficient to overcome this anxiety and to do so within a collective consciousness that allows this exploration in a 'safe' environment. Managers must be
able to position themselves collectively to deal with the conflicts that arise from the process of reflection as they struggle to learn from experience and skilfully manage the tensions between stability and instability.

2.2 An Overview of Management Learning, Organizational Learning, Reflective Learning and Change

2.2.1 Management Learning

Management learning has been one of the most examined and debated topics for decades. Yet, as Kakabadse (2000) identifies, there is still lacking a universal set of clear criteria and parameters that define what it means to be a manager or leader in a company. Without that universal sense of what it means to be a manager, it is not surprising that there exists substantial debate regarding what and how managers learn.

Some writers suggest that leaders who represent the controlling interest of businesses are in essence managers epitomised by the discretionary nature of their roles (Boaden, 2006; Kakabadse, 2000; Trim & Lee, 2004). Discretionary, because the roles they embody and the decisions that emanate from the position have the potential to be transformational in outcome. Thus, adding to the mystic of what is a manager, one encounters the additional dimension of what is the impact of the manager. Watson (2001) indicates that the definition of management is not clear cut with either an established set of operating principles or clearly defined tasks. He indicates that management is more of a social and moral activity which is crafted on human social relations. Whilst this is a useful notion, it does little to inform the premise of what describes a manager’s role. However, Watson does advocate a continual learning
approach to management development, which focuses on the social, relational and moral.

Kakabadse’s (2000) argument supplies an interesting notion of management learning as he explores the common pitfalls of management. His research revealed that there is a prevalence of anxiety in management. He suggests that anxiety is created from fundamental differences of view, tension and an inability to deal effectively with key and sensitive concerns. Kakabadse advocates the constant development of leadership capacity in order to respond to the changing needs of business, although he is unable to advocate a set of pre-determined capabilities. Instead, he offers a group centred approach to management, one which focuses on the capability of the whole.

It is also useful to note here that the ability of managers is not essentially measured in companies by what they know, but on what is the result of what they know. It is plausible then that managers therefore are evaluated on the learning process itself, the ‘how’ rather than the ‘what’, as managers engage with their peers to create the organizational wide responses and delivery of business goals.

What is less clear is how the aforementioned notions inform an understanding of management learning. Firstly, Kakabadse (2000) reveals the complexity encompassed by the role of management. Secondly, his many surveys indicate that there is a tension that exists within management teams which impairs their ability to respond to certain situations. Thus, such tension and desired learning outcomes seem to have the potential to conflict with one another, where tension could create the type of defence behaviour which inhibits the journey towards effective learning experiences. This
aspect will be explored more fully in part two of this thesis but as emotion and learning are seen to be vital aspects of individual functioning (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001), then it is envisaged that emotion and learning are vital to management behaviour.

Emotion, from a social constructivist perspective (Fineman, 1997; Watson, 2000; 2001), is placed within a social context as it guides the individual towards dealing with situations in which they find themselves and responding to these situations. Emotions can of course be both positive and negative and thus the way that they function enables individuals to adapt to certain situations. From the social constructivist perspective at least, emotions are practical and can be learned, or unlearned, as required. The psychoanalytical perspective, however, differs in that rational behaviour obtrudes troublesome emotional considerations. Emotions and the rational therefore are inevitably in conflict (Fineman & Gabriel, 2000), at least in the psychoanalytical school of thought.

In recent years, there has been a gradual overlap between these two aforementioned schools of thought. From the psychoanalytical point of view, emotions are acknowledged as being accessible to organizational and social influences (Armstrong, 2000). In social constructivism (Mangham, 1998) the development of 'hyper-emotion', which is an overpowering emotion(s) marked by its ability to break down orderly exchange, has been postulated. So in management learning there should be recognition that the relationship between cognition and emotion is complex and interactive. However, learning, like emotion, has been subject to different interpretations.
Psychoanalytical interpretations (French, 1997; French & Vince, 1999; Kets de Vries, 2004) emphasise the psychological experience of learning encompassing a certain degree of anxiety in the process. Such anxieties may be consequential of previous learning experiences or aspects such as disappointment or vulnerability. In the psychoanalytical school of thought, it is essential that anxiety is managed consciously in order to ensure an effective learning outcome. As Kets de Vries (2004) identifies, such notions are generally rejected in organizational studies in favour of approaches that are less focussed on what is deemed to be abnormal behaviour.

However, Kets de Vries (2004) usefully affirms that management is not really a purely rational task, performed by strictly rational individuals. This is because we are used to hearing about the sort of incomprehensible activities that arise in business environments today such as the Enron scandal, a financial scandal that was revealed in late 2001; and the Airbus/EADS insider trading concern raised in 2008. Paradoxically, it seems we are keen to deny the impact of such uncontrolled processes but we live these out in our everyday lives. Allowing managers to confront and understand the behaviours that have the potential to inhibit their learning will allow them to respond to learning experiences more quickly. As Kets de Vries (2004:189) states ‘...minds are like parachutes, they function when they are open!’

However, the opening of a manager’s mind still seems to centre on the notions of management acting rationally and with sound judgement. It would appear that management education remains centred on economic value adding subjects, removing the aspects of development which could be covered by humanities (Baccarani, 2008;
Hendry, 2000, 2006; Warr & Downing, 2000). Hendry (2006) argues that business schools focus on the concept of manager as co-ordinating economic activities in a morally neutral capacity. He cites the issues relating to sources of management tension and highlights the problems associated with a lack of mechanisms to be able to address these issues in a learning context. He calls for management education which focuses on the values and political context of what they do. Writers such as these acknowledge a social constructivist approach as a fundamental premise of knowledge but state that this is largely irrelevant, as managers need to have a combination of both traditional science based knowledge and those stemming from humanities, like social anthropology and ethnography. They argue for a shift in management identity.

In order to shift identity existing within the minds of managers and to confront behaviours which have the potential to inhibit individual learning, one has to be able to ascertain which method or methods allow for the confrontation of these issues, without destabilising the organisation in which the system of managing exists. If as some writers propose, managers are not as rational as we would like to imagine then that understanding invokes a response which dovetails the emotional and rational in an harmonious unity, neither one dominating, but each one informing the other (Baccarani, 2008; Kets de Vries, 2004; Michael, 1985; Somech & Crach-Zahavy, 2002). Developed for the purpose of this thesis, it is suggested that there exists a point when managers are receptive and responsive to new ideas, when optimal learning may occur. This point is summarised diagrammatically in Figure 2.5 below.
Conceptually, therefore, it could be argued that managers learn best when rational concepts, apropos the scientific or economic models, link with emotional or human interfaces, whereby emotional responses like anxiety are dealt with as a process of knowing oneself better (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001; Armstrong, 2000; French & Vince, 1999; Hendry, 2006; Kets de Vries, 2004; Mangham, 1998; Watson, 2001). Thus in figure 2.5 it is proposed that there exists an optimal point of learning when rational and emotional responses are kept in balance, through identification, reflection, exploration and examination. This intersection is considered to be important to the study of anxiety and whilst not the focus of the research reported herein, is presented as an area for further research, recommended in part three of this thesis. Nonetheless, these ideas do inform the research embodied within this thesis.

*Figure 2.5 Identification of the Point of Optimal Learning*

Source: Developed for the purpose of this thesis.
Management learning has the potential to impact upon the organization’s capability to evolve itself continually to realise its objectives. This is because if, as suggested in this thesis, managers represent the controlling interests of the business, then change at this level has the potential to evoke a change in the learning preparedness of the organization itself. This notion is examined in section 2.3.2 which follows, as it offers additional insight into consideration of the idea that management learning has the potential to impact on the capability of the organization itself to learn and adapt to change requirements.

2.2.2 Organizational Learning

The literature contains a number of definitions and associations of organizational learning and its link to change. Senge (1990) suggests that organizational learning is epitomized by an organization which embodies continual expansion of its capability to craft its potential, embodied by a group of people continually enhancing their ability to be creative. Senge states that in terms of organizational competitiveness, the rate at which organizations learn is fundamental to competitive advantage. Huber (1991) appears to contradict this notion as he suggests learning can neither be conscious or intentional, not always increasing effectiveness or observable change. Huber’s point, it seems, is more about the potential for change through the processing of information and thus the range of responses available.

The range of responses available is an interesting connotation as management behaviour is often epitomised by notions of control and a set of rationally defined responses to organizational stimuli. The application of rationality invokes a range of responses that, at least for some writers, needs to be effectively controlled and
replicable in given situations. Managers become conditioned to respond to such situations in predictably controlled ways. Weick (1991) suggests that organizational learning is simply a pattern of means-end relations deliberately designed to make the same routine response to stimuli. The argument rests on delivering a routine response, albeit when the stimuli is different, but this argument appears to contradict the notion of learning and adaptation. However, it may be argued that organizational learning is about shared responses to different stimuli as this view supports the notion of an organization wide response.

So far it seems that notions of Organizational Learning have multiple interpretations and associations, which can be confusing when attempting to establish a purposeful and consistent definition. The confusion of definition deepens as Senge's definition appears to be supported by Watkins and Marsick (1993) who define organizational learning as an organization 'that learns continuously and transforms itself'. Malhotra (1996) considers the Learning Organisation as being 'generative' in so far as it supports a continuous experimentation and feedback approach, rather than a reaction to certain conditions.

Beer et al (2005) add that in order for an organization to possess the capability to fit its strategy and its environmental challenges, leaders in the business 'have to be open to learning'. The notion of organizational learning here appears to be tied to the notion of change in a mutually inclusive way, as transformation and future creation appear to be integral to change. However, whilst this is a useful notion, it appears difficult to translate it into how a person can engage with these phenomena in practice.
It appears then, that the notions of organizational learning are somewhat confusing, but what does exist in the literature is an agreement by some writers that individuals learn as agents for the organization and that the knowledge they gain is then stored in the 'organizational memory' (Janson, Cecez-Kecmanovic & Zupancic, 2007; Marquardt & Reynolds 1994; Örtenblad 2002; Pedlar & Aspinwall 1998; Sheehan, 2004a). This understanding has the potential to offer additional insight into the relationship between organization learning and change for the purpose of this research.

It is suggested that whilst organizations can only learn in a metaphorical sense, a combination of learning at individual and group level, utilising ‘double loop learning’ (Argyris, 2002: see Figure 2.6 below) will impact organization learning (as a group wide response to the same stimuli) and change. It is whether the acquisition of knowledge is shared, constructs meaning, is retained in the organizational memory and then retrieved in the action of doing (Akbar, 2003; Hoyrup 2004; Simons, Germans & Ruijters, 2003;) that demonstrates the effectiveness of the desired change materialising. Double loop learning arises when errors are corrected by changing the governing values and then the actions. Diagrammatically, this concept is represented in Figure 2.6, Double Loop Learning;

In Figure 2.6, Argyris (2002) makes the important distinction between two levels of learning. The first, single-loop learning, can be thought of as the development of responses invoked by dealing with discrete conditions, or events, during the course of normal experience. These responses represent the pool of knowledge that is retained for governing future responses to these conditions. By contrast, double-loop learning
not only references those learning experiences but also constructively challenges the single-loop reflex to invoke conditioned responses. In the human mind, this kind of double-loop thinking would lead to active constructions of alternative scenarios in which the learner would play out likely outcomes in a considered way (Guzman & Wilson, 2005). Evolving new learning experiences may replace those conditioned responses and thus allow individuals to discover new meaning and drive a change of behaviour.

**Figure 2.6 Double Loop Learning**

From the perspective of organizational learning, there are opportunities for exploration of triple loop learning. Triple loop learning is said to exist when
organizations increase the fullness and expanse for learning exchange by adopting an overall learning infrastructure (Bateson, 1973; Janson, Cecez-Kecmanovic & Zupancic, 2007; Romme & Witteloostuijn, 1999). Such infrastructure allows for the mutual exchange of ideas, decision making and business strategy at all levels within an organization, as well as delivering the competencies to work within triple loop structures. Whilst notions of triple loop learning fit the collective mindfulness of the organizational context, its focus on systems dynamics was not selected as an area for research in these studies. Triple loop learning does, however, offer the opportunity for further research in the area of the complex relationships between structure and behaviour. This will be suggested as opportunities for additional research in the concluding paragraphs of this thesis.

It is suggested in this thesis that creating opportunities for double loop learning represents a vehicle for breaking through social defences that exist within institutional dynamics. Raising the issue of social defence aspects of the learning experience in double loop learning here may be beneficial because double loop learning may be repressed as a result of removal of what is already known. In addition, it has been indicated in the previous section that anxiety has the potential to heighten at times when individuals are confronted with the need to unlearn conditioned responses to organizational stimuli.

Increased anxiety may cause fear as individuals come to terms with the reality that their current knowledge ceases to be relevant. Thus, learning has the potential to become a trial and error approach and not an adaptive and evolutionary experience, as an individual may adopt behaviours to defend themselves against
any negative associations with unlearning or new learning requirements. Managers may want to hold onto what is known and therefore what is comfortable to their experience. Hence, what is proposed is an approach which invites the analysis and understanding of the complex interplays on the group learning experience, rather than just focussing on the individual experience. It is this aspect of Organizational Learning that informs the studies herein reported.

It has also been suggested that change can only arise if the leaders of the business can hold an ‘organization-wide conversation’, and are adaptable to the feedback they receive (Beer et al 2005). What is agreed by many writers on the subject (Antonacopoulou, 2006; Fineman, 1993, 1997; Hendry, 2006; Sun & Scott, 2003; Watson, 2000, 2001; Yeo, 2006) is the concept that organizational learning is a social process. What is needed is a way to capture the relationships that exist across levels of analysis and the multi-dimensional aspects of the learning experience and its impact on change.

Focusing on managerial learning experiences may assist in understanding the impact of these experiences on individual, group and organizational levels of practice. Extending the principles of double loop learning in this research adopts an approach which allows interconnectivity of emergent themes. Such interconnectivities can be assessed and/or reflected upon and engaged with, as integral to the learning process. In organizational terms, the learning processes which interconnect in the day to day activities of the business may have the ability to impact the success or otherwise of change adoption. Exploring the crossover between organizational change and learning is the topic of the next section.
2.2.3 Organizational Change and Learning

Several writers on organizational change view learning as key to ensuring continuous competitive advantage (Armstrong & Foley, 2003; Schein, 1993; Senge, 1990). Thus, they align learning with organizational change. In recent times, however, the pace of change has been quite rapid with many organizations addressing fast and continual change requirements (Appelbaum, St-Pierre & Glavas, 1998; Kontoghiorghes, Awbrey & Feurig, 2005; O'Hara & Sayers, 1996; Peters, 1987). The current pressures being faced worldwide as a result of the so called ‘credit crunch’ serve as a contemporary example. Change puts an enormous pressure on existing systems of learning and it is suggested that double-loop learning provides a vehicle for managing the learning transitions necessary for effective responses to change (Kontoghiorghes, Awbrey & Feurig, 2005) in such a dynamic environment.

The notion that one method of learning dominates the change process, or indeed impacts it at all, is a topic of much debate. There does appear to be congruence between the requirements for individuals to embark on an individual learning process conjoined with the need for organizational wide change (De Loo, 2002; O'Hara & Sayers, 1996). However, there are some writers who have questioned the concept that organizations behave like individuals because, they argue, individuals have different learning approaches (Belbin, 1993; Honey & Mumford, 1982). What emerges, therefore, is a dilemma in trying to evaluate what constitutes organizational change amongst a number of opposing views. Firstly, that organizational change is the result of individuals learning individually (Boyatzis & McKee, 2006; O'Hara & Sayers, 1996). Secondly, that organizational change is the collective learning experience that
denotes effective organizational transformation (Pedlar, Burgoyne & Boydell, 2004). Thirdly, that individual learning and organizational change are mutually dependent (DeFillippi, Grabher & Jones, 2007; O’Hara, Murphy & Reeve, 2007).

There does, however, appear to be some uniformity in the literature suggesting that learning is part of the process towards change. Some questions regarding the vehicle for change itself, whether it is individual learning, collective group learning or organizational change and learning working in partnership, however, appear to remain unanswered. Thus, the relationship between learning and change is a little awkward (Petersen, Boer & Gertsen, 2004). As Petersen, Boer and Gertsen (2004) suggest, all these interpretations may be valid. For the purpose of this thesis, it was seen to be important to conceptualise the impact of learning on change in the context that change represents the transformation of organizational outcomes.

For the purpose of this thesis, change was conceptualised as a learning process, resulting in outcomes which improved the way that the organizations in the studies herein reported responded to the need for change. Adding to his concept was the notion that managers, who represent the controlling interests in the organizations studied, have a meaningful impact on the teams within their control and thus the management group itself has the ability to transform business outcomes collectively. In modified form, this thesis shares Antonacopoulou’s (2006) notions of the interrelationships of individual, group and organizational learning and change. Such notions inform the research framework and are presented below in Figure 2.7, *The Interrelationship across multiple levels of learning*. 54
Antonacopoulou (2006) identifies that learning does not take place in a vacuum, that notions of learning are inexorably linked with organizational politics, notions of power and control (the dotted ellipses) and the tensions between individual and organizational learning priorities (the inward facing arrows). However, the research here reported, differs to Antonacopoulou’s (2006) work in that the strength of association with existing learning processes and context is questioned. This understanding will form part of the process of cross case review in that whether the learning context is directly related to the political environment of the sectors studied will be examined. Such examination is reported in Part Two of this thesis.

It has been highlighted in this thesis that reflective learning has the potential to support the potential of managers to learn effectively and engage in collective processes. Such activities may promote abilities to adapt to the needs of business change and evoke a shared sense of purpose. In doing so, such reflective practice may
offer opportunity to explore and understand anxiety causation and impact on individual and organizational learning and change. The topic of reflective learning is examined in the next section.

2.2.4 Reflective Learning

Talbot (1997) usefully states that managers' ability to challenge and develop new practices concurrently with tangible experience and reflective study is a key to successful organisational change. In addition, there is a desire to step beyond the boundaries and limits of individual awareness to a group consciousness and collective inquiry. Reynolds (1998) argues, however, that the opportunities for reflective thinking have been limited, at least historically, by a focus on individual problem solving. This view is supported by Moon (1999) who states that a common and agreed upon reflection does not exist.

Schön (2000) proposes that managers reflect in action in order to rationalise their intuitive understanding to work problems. For him, reflection consists of spontaneous criticising, reorganization, and testing of insightful understanding of experiences. He describes it as a process whereby managers utilise their stock of organizational knowledge, in the action of doing. He further argues that if individual reflective learning exists, particularly at a management level, within a system that offers an opportunity for group reflection, then strategic change may be supported. Of course, one could argue that there are other facets within management structures which drive effective strategic change, such as a change of team, an intervention from a parent company, or direct corporate control. However, these aspects tend not to be common
events and Schön's notions are useful considerations in the research herein reported because they focus on change within existing team structures.

Schön (2000) considers that the system may promote or inhibit reflection-in-action and will be more or less open to reciprocal reflection-in-action. If management teams are to engage in what Schön describes as reciprocal reflection-in-action, then what is needed is a concern with questioning assumptions; a focus on social reflection; an analysis of power relationships; a concern with democracy; and a willingness to adapt to the needs of change.

However, effective change and the concept of honest inquiry and action can evoke negative feelings in individuals and teams. As Vince (2002) states, the notion of appraising and exploring assumptions generated in the organization may invoke anxiety in individuals, as they perceive a loss of what is known; and in teams with the difficulty of analysing the collective consciousness with the participation of all involved. Fineman (2003:121) clarifies that from a psychoanalytical perspective, change in work groups can 'raise feelings of vulnerability, embarrassment and fear among their members and suggests that where the threat perceived by such change is shared, but not openly addressed, reactions are likely to be unhelpful towards effecting the change desired in the organizational context.

Thus there needs to be some understanding of what defines 'reflection' and what may be the link to learning. A useful definition of reflection is supplied by Van Bolhuis-Poortvliet and Snoek (1996), as cited in Høyrup (2004:444):
Reflection is a mental activity aimed at investigating one’s own action in a certain situation and involving a review of the experience, an analysis of causes and effects, and the drawing of conclusions concerning future action.

Høyrup emphasises that the definition lends an individual approach to reflection, commonly coined as ‘the reflective practitioner’ but states that at least organizationally, it is important for individuals to reflect together in social interaction.

Again, Høyrup (2005) makes some useful observations here as he expands the concept of reflection from an individual cognitive process or introspection, towards a method of organizational learning. The connection, at least for him, is individuals reflecting together in an organizational context and embedded in social interaction (Høyrup, 2004). Beer et al (2005:449) share this notion and suggest the importance of the engagement of enough employees throughout the organization to share in the process of ‘honest inquiry and action’. Effectiveness of change is, they suggest, dependent on this process and impacts the commitment of employees to organizational outcomes.

The effectiveness of these reflective learning experiences rests on the competence of those participating in such activities (Jermier, Forbes, Benn & Orsato, 2006). Competence in this regard centres on the ability of participants to be able to engage in reciprocal listening, civility and openness to one another. This form of discourse potentially exposes participants to strong critique from others and the associated negative feelings such exposure may muster.
Reflective practice, at least in its group experience, has the potential to expose individuals to the scrutiny of others' interpretations and evaluations of individual experiences. This notion calls attention to the perceived weaknesses or implausibility of an experience, plans and actions, and can evoke feelings of anxiety as those weaknesses are explored and commented upon. Of course, one likes to imagine that the boundaries of shared experience when defined are respected but at the emotional level, these aspects may be difficult to control. As suggested earlier, when emotional and rational responses are not kept in balance, there may be a negative impact upon the point of optimal learning.

For the purposes of the research herein reported, there was seen to be a need to conceptualise each of the aforementioned concepts in a holistic way. The next section, therefore, seeks to link together the above considerations, as they relate to the Research Questions.

2.2.5 Link between Management Learning, Organizational Learning, Reflective Learning and Organizational Change

Kohut (1971) argued that the progress of change is cultivated as a task of management to develop an insightful, mature and realistic concept of action. Hurst, Rush and White (1989) reveal that managers have a significant role to play in this process. However, there appears to be a difficulty in effectively operationalizing this concept in tangible learning experiences. The concept of action and insight, it seems, is connected mainly to task based approaches, rather than an organizational wide approach.
This confusion is evidenced by many of the learning approaches to management development which have often centred on the development of individual skills and professional knowledge (Hendry, 2006; Management Charter Initiative–UK 1990; Peters, 1987; Wickens, 1987). The concept of organizational learning, at least for individual development initiatives at managerial level, is a remote notion, if recognised at all.

Literature in the 1980's that became popular management development material offered a prescriptive approach to management learning. Peters (1987) focussed on management ability and the notion of employee participation. Wickens (1987) emphasised the quality principles and methodologies of systems thinking. Mintzberg (1987) suggested the principles of control and the reduction of uncertainty. There remains very little evidence that these aspects drive change and writers remain inconsistent in their arguments about the effectiveness of each of the aforementioned approaches over time. What is consistent in the literature, however, is that organizations are still struggling with the ability to effect meaningful and enduring change.

By the turn of the 21st century, Mabey and Iles (2001) recognised the need for managers to be adaptable given the accelerating pace of change and that managers should become adaptive learners, creating a vision juxtaposed against what is known and experienced concurrently. Dale (2001) indicates that the culture of any organization is influenced by its original purpose as evolved through time, the employees and the stakeholders of the business. Managers then would appear to hold a key to changing the system of organizing but as Dale (2001) acknowledges, it is not
unusual for managers to feel that they are powerless to achieve change and have limited opportunities to learn and grow. Dale comments that inevitably, individual managers must rely on others to effect change and transform the organization in response to the drivers to change.

Managers must rely on others to help effect the change to which they aspire, to create a feedback mechanism and to create learning experiences that are shared collectively. This position is supported by Salaman and Butler (2001) who emphasize the need for individuals, teams and organizations to be able to understand themselves, their business processes, their composition and their business contexts. However, if managers are unable to effect change in isolation, there appears to be little use in evolving individual competence as opposed to group experiential opportunities (Margerison, 2001).

Margerison (2001) extended the debate further, disagreeing with the focus on management skill development and recognised that this type of focus, rather than on experiential and existential development, limits change effectiveness. He states that there should evolve a new way of supporting managers not only to learn individually, but to develop a collective approach to effecting change. The importance of this approach is that it is centred on real experiences, reflected upon by individual managers in the action of managing, in action and as part of experiential learning. In that way action and reflection are mutually consistent, an approach termed 'performative reflexivity' by Alexander (2005).
Alexander (2005) defines 'performative reflexivity' as a situation whereby a socio-cultural group, or its most discerning members acting on their behalf, use the process of reflection to adjust their actions in the process of action. In so doing, the inherent impact of such reflective experiences is the power to transmit and critique context, group and individual experiences. Thus change becomes an evolution from experience, shaping organically the organizational learning experience. These concepts informed the studies reported in this thesis but it is proposed as an insight into this subject that optimal learning experiences can only exist at the point of most favourable learning exchange, when emotions and rational thoughts are in balance, neither dominating the other.

Antonacopoulou (2006) examines the relationship between individual and organizational learning, and the interplay of the onion ring of learning exchange. She identifies from the inner ring moving outward, as individual, then group, organization, industry/sector and society. As the circles touch each other, notions of power, politics and learning experiences themselves impact on the effectiveness of learning exchange. Antonacopoulou concludes that organizational learning is a cultural process and learning experiences reflect the institutional identities of managers in response to organizational conditions. Thus individual learning reflects the organizational learning in which it exists. This notion is interesting as it seems to be contrary to previous insight into organizational learning as an amalgam of the gestalt of individual learning experiences.

An understanding of the links between management learning, organizational learning and change is fraught with difficulty. There appear to be many schools of thought
interplaying to paint a confusing overview of the subject area. Notions of change are juxtaposed with notions of task centred management approaches, systems approaches, and an evolution of collaborative management or shared experiences. Notions of learning interplay with locus of control and the opportunity to learn from experience also are noted.

For the purpose of the studies herein reported, a number of core tenets of enquiry were adopted from those aspects of literature offering a plausible connection with the research topic. By separating the tenets of examination in this way, the confusion stemming from the literature on this subject could be confronted and aligned to the research subject matter. As the basis of exploration centred on anxietical effects of senior management teams, it was considered that it may be purposeful to focus initially on the individual manager and the interconnections with the Senior Management Team.

This focus lent itself to an approach which considered the psychoanalytical nature of learning, not least because emotional consideration would be necessary in order to examine notions of anxiety. Implied in this consideration was a new concept that successful learning experiences may be heightened at the Point of Optimal Learning. However, as the practice of management is by necessity a social activity, then collaborative approaches seemed a way to enhance individual understanding towards a unified understanding of the causes of anxiety. Unifying understanding drew attention to the opportunities to apply double loop learning as a prospect for Senior Management Teams to reappraise their experiences in the ‘here and now’ of management activity.
The dynamic nature of change in the three organizations studied implied that by necessity there needed to be a multiple layered approach to understanding learning activities in the context of organizational power and politics. This is because power and politics have the potential to impact the effectiveness of the learning agenda. These considerations are drawn on to inform the research approach and are seen to be vehicles for exploring the causes of anxiety.

2.2.6 Summary of Chapter Two, Section 3

An overview of the approaches towards management learning and its links to organizational learning and change has resulted in a rather convoluted and sometimes conflicting appraisal. What is required is a process which allows for an evolution in management learning towards an organizational wholeness or gestalt. This wholeness has the potential to integrate the paradoxical nature of management development with a potentially positive impact on change.

It has been reasoned that the concept of reflective learning offers a basis of critical reflection and identity-focussed dialogue, which will promote behaviour that should, at least theoretically, create more effective organizational change. In terms of the conceptual framework that underpins this thesis, it is proposed that learning should constitute a behavioural change within the manager, the management group and the system of organizing. The system of organizing should impact the infrastructure of the organization and hence promote an organization-wide responsiveness to stimuli. Such a response becomes organizational learning and hence impacts on successful organizational outcomes.
Critical self-reflection offers the opportunity to question the ongoing viability of the existing organizational system. It is proposed that the potential alternative perspectives arising from the approach will assist both individuals and teams to build scenarios of future outcomes relative to the current modus operandi. This will also mean that managers will need to evolve an ability to manage skilfully the tension between stability and instability, anxiety and collaboration, as new scenarios are realised and adapted. It is also proposed that the ability to manage these associations will impact on the ability to self-learn as emotional and rational struggle to stay in balance to allow for the Point of Optimal Learning.

Change is stimulated through the ability to be reflective by raising issues that should lead to constructive debates as a fuller and more informed appreciation of organizational limits are formulated. It is through collective awareness of what is understood in the organization, and through the collective experience and appreciation of what needs to be realized, that effective change can be driven. In the next section, notions of the collective experience and its influence on the design of the research studies undertaken are examined.

2.3 Key Concepts of the Collective Mind and Notions of Collective Learning

Exploring societal phenomena collectively is an approach to evolving new ways to develop individual, group and organizational learning. It sits within group relations theory which suggests that knowledge and understanding in teams is socially shared among the individuals who constitute the group (Backström, 2004; Boethius, 1999; Brown, 2000; Clarke et al, 2009; Hutchins, 1991; Knights and Willmott, 1989; Resnick et al, 1991; Weick & Roberts, 1993). According to this perspective, when
people act as a social force collectively, it is thought that their joint actions contribute to represent the system in which they operate and interconnect that constructed action within the system. Individual contribution represents the system and reinforces it almost as a self-fulfilling prophecy and experiential reality of the work institution.

Weick and Roberts (1993) suggest that group phenomenon is both the product and the condition of the actions of individuals. So it is the action of the collective group of individuals which give an appearance of being under the direction of one reality. In the system of work, it can be interpreted as a collective representation of a unified approach to the organization. The 'mind' enacted in the collective process is associated with activity, rather than the institution itself. The focus here is on the inter-relations between people. These inter-relations create the social force or system of organizing experienced in many institutions and yet the system does not have an identity of itself. This concept allows for an examination of the process of collective ambition through reflective learning as individuals consider the impact they have in the 'here and now' on the system.

Sathe and Smart (1997) address the collective ambition of the members of the organization. Collective ambition is defined by them as an underlying sense of purpose and motivation which members of the organization share. Building on the work of Drucker (1954), and Hamel and Prahalad (1994), they focus on the notion of strategic intent and collective understanding of that intent which for them creates the 'winning organization'.
By contrast, Backström (2004) highlights the problems associated with, in his view, an almost naïve expectation that collective understanding equates to the ‘winning organization’. His notion of collective experiences, and in particular learning experiences, is based on a complex systems theory which highlights the difficulties of assumptions based on group experiences. In particular, he highlights concerns with management assumptions of the success of self managed work teams and warns of the consequences of poorly distributed autonomy without the necessary power devolution to get things done. He adds that collective awareness may be hampered due to the lack of group cohesiveness which may be lost in the process. So by only focusing on intent, devolving some power and creating autonomous work groups is not enough.

Backström (2004) created a model based on collective learning experiences as opposed to a focus on the individual as part of a coherent whole. He clarifies that collective learning (p. 472)

is neither the sum of the learning of the individuals nor the learning of the formal organization separated from individuals. The focus is on the common competence that emerges between the individuals.

He modifies Kolb’s learning cycle to be a closed circle with an external learning experience (interaction, influence and collective reflection between group members) and internal learning experience (comprehended experience made common). This notion is at odds with other writers like Anderson and Thorpe (2004) where the focus is on managers enhancing individual competence and knowledge. Group experiences hone the individual ability but the body collective is no more than a vehicle for individual exploration and critical reflection.
Schatzki (2005) seeks to understand social phenomena from a site ontology perspective. Site ontology explores social phenomena from the basis that social life is inherently tied to a context in which it emerges. He argues that social phenomenon and human interaction are an inherent part of the site or context of the enactment of that phenomenon. The approach steers a path between individualism and socialism. Somewhat of a middle road, he offers a compelling view of organized human activities and material arrangements embodied in the site of experience. Humans co-exist because they are linked by a chain of action and ‘commonalities in, as well as orchestrations of, their ends, projects, and emotions’ (p. 472).

Schatzki (2005) refers to Weick and Roberts (1993) work to inform his argument that collective mind exists because people interact in a heedful way. But he discounts the heedfulness as a total concept because he argues that Weick and Roberts overlook the role that practices in sites play in establishing emergent patterns of activity. In his interpretation, a shared objective gives people a shared mentality, through patterns, rituals, practices and interactive arrangements. In the case of work, shared site ontology would be represented by the site of social practice and processes. The set of activities that create the practice at a site level would include policies, rules, structures, work environment and understanding of how to get things done. Sites provide a physical container for organizations which are essentially social structures.

If we consider that organizations are social structures, then there are various interpretations which define what social phenomenon means. Weick (1979) advocates the concept of organizations as an amalgam of the interrelations of action. Schatzki (2005) sees the site as a complex interweaving of practices and material arrangements
which either mutually sustain or create conflict with one another. It is the interlocking of these components which offer further explanation of organizational activity. The interconnections of these associations whilst complex are nonetheless useful alternative perspectives on the notions of collective mind in the context of place.

2.3.1 Implications for Management and Organizational Learning

In a group setting, it is proposed that improvements in the reflective capacity of individuals, without changes in the collective consciousness, may have a limited impact on the system and therefore on the need for, or success of, change. Change is brought about as a product of collective processes or collective ‘sense making’ (Reichers & Schneider, 1990; Rousseau, 1990) where individuals communicate, agree and disagree, and understand communally, explanations for work-related events.

As we congregate in organizational settings and adapt to systems of work, more of our thinking and beliefs are subject to influence by those around us. It is anticipated that individuals will be able to conform to the system of organizing and doubt is eliminated, at least conceptually, by the acts of organizing (Backstrom, 2004). If individuals are encouraged to examine multiple interpretations of reality and through reflection and exploration, reshape their working arrangements or inter-relations, then learning is involved. Exploring the multiple interactions that exist within the site of the organization offers an additional layer of analysis which explores the societal framework of organizational life from a shared understanding of reality (Shatzki, 2005). If a collective process permits the expression of doubt, or the sharing of anxiety, then alternative interpretations have the potential to present themselves (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001).
Stimuli in a number of guises may create the emotional need for change. These may prompt individual reactions and, in the reflection of the experience, may create new behaviours and new experiences, but may also produce emergent anxieties. In a collective process, where reflection is encouraged at a group level, anxiety may inspire interaction and exploration within the collective and move the group towards a collective consciousness of what needs to be done (Heimer & Vince 1998; Schein, 1993). What needs to be understood here is that although individuals contribute to the system, it requires a collective consciousness to transform their learning into organization learning. Notions of the site of organization offer additional perspectives on the notion of collective awareness and in the research design for the studies herein reported was supported by triangulation approaches to evaluate management practice. Such approaches are explained in chapter 8.

2.3.2 Summary of Chapter Two, Section 4

In this section the notion of collective mind on management and organizational learning has been explored. Engaging with collective processes in formulating a collective consciousness of what needs to be done may provide the potential for the system to adopt the new ways of work as each individual enacts their role in the system. The collective consciousness of the institution is then realised and meaningful sustainable change may result. Releasing the collective consciousness in research of this nature requires consideration to the longitudinal nature of new awareness when the group inquiry ends.
2.4 Overview of Literature Review and Gaps to Be Addressed

In this section, an overview is provided regarding the potential gaps to be addressed through this research as identified by the literature review. The chapter started with an examination of the literature regarding notions of anxiety. It was indicated that notions of anxiety involve a complex system of responses to emerging situations and that individuals adopt a number of defence mechanisms to protect themselves against the negative affect and psychological arousal that may be generated. Such defence mechanisms have the potential to create belief systems that become established through time. It was suggested that previous studies had not been able to address fully the ability of organizations to create a safe harbour in which to explore the belief systems; and that notions of power and politics had been largely ignored in previous studies. The research herein reported seeks to explore those associations in an environment which permits the exploration of such aspects and encounters the impact of power and politics unleashed through experience.

The literature review also indicates that social defences are unconscious processes which become embedded in the organization ritual and in its systems and structures. It was suggested that there exists a Point of Optimal Learning whereby individuals have the potential to engage with such defences by enabling them to tackle the embedded organizational reality through individual experience. Emotions and learning were considered to be vital components of management behaviour. A shift in such behaviour and a movement to a different management identity was considered as being fundamental to organizational learning. Such approaches have the potential to become embedded in the organisational memory and to support change.
It was considered that an organizational wide conversation would also connect learning to the day to day activities of the business. As such, it was conceptualised that change represents the transformation of organizational activities and is thus a learning process. There was evidence that learning processes could be enhanced by the application of reflective learning. The literature indicated that there was a limited usage of such learning in organizations today as there tends to be a focus on individual problem solving.

It was suggested that in order to break away from the individual problem centred approach, managers needed to evolve the competence to engage in reciprocal listening, civility and questioning with others. The potential for the Point of Optimal learning during this process was considered as was the ability for managers to engage with performative reflexivity in the midst of action. The here and now of lived experience indicated that there was potential in this research to engage with the impact such reflexive practice may have on the system of work and to engage in collective sense making through group discovery.

These aspects informed the research herein reported. The next chapter highlights the theoretical and philosophical basis of the research methodology. It also explains the reasons that have motivated the choice of the research method.
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the chosen methodology for the studies undertaken and re-states the Research Questions. The chapter is seen as linking together the Research Questions stated in Chapter One and the approach to the research described in Chapter Five. It may also be seen as providing the theoretical, methodological basis and the principle for the research approach. It contains elements of what understanding, subject matter and approach guided and informed the studies herein reported.

The chapter outlines the benefits of the case study approach; the appropriateness of co-operative inquiry through action research and participatory approaches, including interpretive interactionism; and ethical considerations.

The Research Questions are briefly restated in order to open this chapter and then follows the approaches used to address the questions.

3.1 The Research Questions

As cited earlier in this thesis, the aim of the studies is to investigate the questions,

1. What is the nature and impact of anxiety in senior management teams?

2. What are the effects of anxiety on learning and change within these teams?

The questions were addressed by focussing on the senior management teams of three organizations, of which the researcher was part, in an effort to understand how all participants experienced group process in the context of business change. The focus started as a capturing of experience and a response to the phenomena being
encountered, and how learning different approaches socially shaped their experience and work outcomes. A case study approach not only suited the multiple cases explored in this research but presented a methodology for understanding the individual experience and its collective impact.

3.2 Case Study

Yin (1984) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. A case study is useful when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. A key strength of the case study method involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process.

Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Case study research offers the opportunity to assist the researcher to evolve an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. The benefit of the case study approach is particularly pertinent to single researchers as it allows them to focus on one aspect of a situation in real time over a period of time (Bell, 1996). Case studies emphasize an in-depth contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. The researcher seeks to establish a chain of evidence from analysis of the data gathered.
This research was a journey which explored meaning for individuals in senior management teams. Therefore, it lent itself to an approach to internal validity commensurate with trustworthiness and rigour of the research outcomes. Cross case study review was also supportive in these studies of the purposefulness of the data integrity as it was examined across similar cases (Creswell, 2006).

Case study research does not tend to support generalization or prediction (Dooley, 2002). Case study research, however, has the capability to support multiple cases and multiple research paradigms. This was considered to be a useful component for the studies herein reported which although grounded by the research questions, were able to embrace different paradigms towards a holistic view of the topic under examination. Internal validity was a more purposeful emphasis of the methodological design as it was considered that this had the potential to demonstrate that the conditions being observed may lead to other conditions which are then ratified through the process of data triangulation during the discovery phase of the research. As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, validity in qualitative research is about credibility (internal validity), applicability (external validity), purposeful sampling (generalizability), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity). In these studies the aspects highlighted by Miles and Huberman (1994) as congruent with good case study design, were adopted as follows:

a) **Credibility**

Throughout the research, efforts were made to ensure that data collection and the participants' understanding of datum were located in the context of the organization and of the participants' experiences.
b) **Applicability**

The relationship between findings intra and extra case studies was interpreted through a new model of data treatment and analysis. In addition, the data was triangulated by using a new model to examine the interrelationships and/or differences between the data collated as part of this research.

c) **Purposeful sampling**

Participants in the case studies represented the controlling interests of each case and therefore were considered to be purposeful in the context of understanding anxiety in senior management teams.

d) **Dependability**

Wherever practicable, emergent themes were explored by the participants themselves. Where this was not possible, the author drew inference from the outcomes of the structured interviews and the ‘voices’ of the participants themselves.

e) **Confirmability**

The essence of these studies is that they tell the story of the participants’ experiences in the context of a changing framework of organizational life today. Inherent in these experiences will be the human psyche which is conditioned by its encounters both within and external to the organizational situation. Confirmability extends within the plausibility of the story of each case and its applicability to others in similar situations. A multiple case study approach seeks to conjoin the lived experiences of participants in similar but unique organizations, and explore the similarities or indeed differences of such occurrences. In these cases it was evident that leadership
behaviour was affected by strong associations of experience which were symptomatic of anxiety.

3.3 Data Collection

In the studies here reported, a disciplined approach was adopted in order to ensure confirmability. The approach allowed the exploration of emergent themes, including political associations and interpretations (following Reason, 1994; 1999) and informed the research. For effective individual and group reflection to arise, the studies were methodologically grounded in the concept that all participants must be genuine collaborators in that they are both fully engaged in the process of enquiry and have a voice that is heard in exploring themes and concepts.

It was felt important in the methodology to ensure that the researcher, as action-researcher, did not dominate group activity or the outcome of the enquiry in the knowledge that outcomes had the potential to be distorted due to researcher interference. Ground rules were developed in each case study which undertook to set certain behavioural boundaries and create a safe environment for the exploration of difficult issues and associations. Table 3.1 represents an example of the meeting guidelines developed in one of these studies to assist with the feedback session after the manager interviews were completed.
Table 3.1   Guidelines for Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guidelines for Discussion</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the issue, not the person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain the dignity and self respect of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone has the right to be heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries of time and space will be respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-one will interrupt when others are putting their point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality is maintained within the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All opinions count</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Developed for the Purpose of these Studies

The Guidelines offered a way of steering through difficult topics and associations, ensuring that the participants were heedful of their fellow participants. These were built by each case study group as a way of establishing their relations with one another and setting some basic principles for their own behaviour. Group relationships are inevitably challenged as increasing understanding between participants and obtaining reciprocal relationships are part of action research methodologies (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000; Levesque et al, 2004). The guidelines allowed for the management of expectations up front and assisted in the management of relationship tensions that arose in the process of discovery (Levesque et al, 2004).

In these studies, relationship experiences may also result in a phenomenon called 'consensus collusion' (Heron, 1971:15) which has the potential to arise when participants become ensnared in reinforcing the status quo. For learning to be realised, it is typical that individuals become something new and different so that they can
appraise the difference and give it meaning (Mann, 2005). Challenging group opinion was a useful way of breaking opportunities for group collusion as this allowed for the questioning of assumptions and the control of the potential anxiety impact of unlearning. Ensuring that effective enquiry was adapted through a process of probity and questioning ensured that the group questioned its own conclusions individually as well as collectively, and that these considerations are generated as part of this thesis.

In this thesis, the research was structured as a co-operative enquiry which cycles back on itself, allowing opportunities for action and reflection, which cumulatively progresses and refines the next action and practice (Marshall, 2004). Inherent here was the need for effective feedback from and between participants. Such approaches to data collection ensured that there existed a mechanism to cross check and reflect upon associations developed in the process of exchange. The enquiry was structured through the inclusion of a structured interview with participants to obtain feedback regarding the participants' views about their work lives.

Proposed questions were sent out to a sample of the participants for initial feedback on the type, context and structure of the interview. Feedback was mainly received via e-mail and the structured interview design was thus supported and modified at the design stage by the participants themselves. Where possible, the structured interviews were conducted on a one to one basis, or due to time and availability pressures, participants completed their interviews through an on line process and I followed up with them individually later.
Following the interview stage of the research in each case study, participants were invited to attend a feedback session whereby the participants would be presented with the emerging themes stemming from the interviews. Where these sessions arose, participants were asked to reflect on the emergent themes, evaluate, explore and consider those themes. Such involvement ensured that an active recycling of concepts evolved in the data gathering process. The feedback meeting was either added to the agenda of a management meeting or held as a separate session when all participants were planning to be together to review company performance. This was a practical issue as in many of the case studies, senior managers were frequently travelling on business and gathering participants together was not easy.

Themes were distributed around the room as large posters and individuals were given a pad of removable notes. Each participant could add to the concepts at any time with examples, views and opinions of what was stated. This offered an additional dimension of contribution (Schein, 1987). Where individuals lacked confidence in speaking in the general discussion, they were able to capture their feedback through other mechanisms, during breaks or when desired. Such feedback could be discussed at later points in the discussion. The action researcher was also an active contributor in the discussion as an active, reflective participant (Marshak & Heracleous, 2005; Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

The exploration of themes in these case studies offers opportunities to look at the same data and penetrate deeper into the meaning behind data analysis. Such reviews have supported the convergence of meaning or have created a diversion away from
initial concepts which arose in the early stages of the studies herein reported and are captured in the findings of the study.

It was anticipated that the process of inquiry could be perceived as invasive by some and therefore it was feasible to assume that without awareness and careful management of these tensions, the results of the research had the potential to be distorted. The openness of the group to address individual anxiety openly and to allow space for individual healing to arise during group interventions was actively supported (Park, 2001; Reason, 1998). This meant that the group controlled when it wished to take its breaks, arising when fatigue or periods of heightened emotional states were aired. Tensions were also controlled by referencing the ground rules and encouraging an exchange of views based on the issues that needed to be addressed.

It was not always possible to depersonalise these exchanges and participants were offered the opportunity to de-brief with the researcher after these events. During these discussions, participants were able to reflect on the experiences encountered and as researcher I encouraged them towards exploring the associations these highly charged situations meant for them (Finlay, 2002).

Striking the balance between opportunities for reflection and experiential learning was encountered as the group adopted its own balance between action and reflection (Burgess, 2006; Martin, 2001). In the research here reported, the examination of the emergent themes was adopted in this didactic way in order to evolve an understanding on which proportion of these aspects was best adopted for each theme addressed.
In these studies, it was often easier to close discussions which become messy and tense. It was a challenge at times to ensure that discussion opportunities were not closed prematurely as it was recognised that early closure could limit the ability to explore and examine the phenomena delivering such tension. Thus, premature closure was seen as having the potential to inhibit the action-research outcomes. Preparing the group for such potential outcomes and the need for toleration was an evolutionary aspect, assisted by group cohesion and the development of trust between group members. Creative resolution was maintained by reinforcing the need to acknowledge such tension, which, if tolerated, could be explored as part of the study.

Such inter-subject testing between action-researcher and each member of the group enabled the testing of theories in the context of action. Theories can be tested and re-evaluated, either supporting the espoused theory or modifying it by evaluating unintended behaviours or outcomes from the intervention. The point of validation here is more about the ability to test theories or abstract interpretations into concrete and directly observable actions.

By using three case studies, the implications of these actions in not only considered in terms of the specific organizations studied, but on the applicability of these actions in other contexts. It was felt that this would help delineate the significance of the research outcomes. Within each case study, data analysis, coupled with action and reflection and the appropriateness of these considerations outside of the immediate research area, was considered (following Yin, 2003). Transmuting results from one case study to another and testing and re-evaluating outcomes offer further confirmation of the rigour of research conclusions (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003).
In each of the three case studies examined as part of this inquiry, the sources of data were seen to be rich within the context of each organization. As a practicing and active member of the senior management team of each company, the researcher had access to the senior management team members on a daily basis, and was involved in dealing with strategic and tactical organizational issues. Access to minutes, meeting notes, interviews with individuals, assorted correspondence and my own reflections provided a diverse and extensive source of data. Such a variety of data types could very well be overwhelming and there were times that the richness and variety of data posed its own challenges in transforming and interpreting such qualitative data. Data treatment, organization and structuring were an important aspect of data interpretation, together with triangulation of data types to build on emergent themes, and to cross collaborate these themes (following Creswell, 2006).

The importance of data triangulation through the contemporaneous selection of data types together with the examination of positive or negative inference of emergent themes were seen to be congruent with data validity techniques which will be explored in Chapter Six. The data were categorised and coded in order to identify themes, dynamics and relationships operating as part of organizational phenomena.

3.3.1 Contextualising Data Collection Processes

In reality, all data points represent a representation of a situation in time, in context, and with inherent bias and associated inferences (Stablein, 2006). Thus, one could argue that not all data is data per se, if by data we mean the commonly referred to statistical representation of information. However, the word ‘data’ is the plural of ‘datum’ in its literal translation from the Latin to mean ‘something given’, and
therefore implies factual information not necessarily numerical in being. The legitimacy of some data as a justifiable reflection of organizational experience is not without question and one which indicates to any researcher the importance of legitimate accounts and representations (Creswell, 2006).

Legitimacy extends into the methodological approach towards organizational exploration in particular by ensuring a two-way correspondence between the data and the organizational reality that the data represents (Stablein, 2006). In each of the case studies this two-way correspondence was ensured through interventions such as group meetings, open communications via e-mail exchanges, removable note additions to emergent theme posters, to name a few, which allowed for the exploration of emergent themes and supported the process of discovery.

The relevance of data application and acceptance of research outcomes, particularly in social levels of inquiry, is emphasised by Gummesson (2006) as the conjoining of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Within the strategies for grounded theory, which represents the premise of this inquiry, Gummesson highlights that we search for variables and concepts that absorb the core of the phenomenon. These studies link together a number of methods of inquiry to ensure that data is triangulated, insofar as triangulation can support or negate inferences from data sets or emergent themes and is based on the application of grounded theory.

In terms of the validity of such research approaches in social sciences, it is important to consider the opposite views associated with the reliance of data triangulation as an appropriate and accurate interpretivist technique. Silverman (1998) highlights the
difficulties of using what he describes as 'ad hoc' techniques. He identifies the problems associated with a researcher's sense of context. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that if researchers expect to reach a fundamental understanding of structure and process, then they must ensure that a robust sense of context is presented to the reader. If the researcher de-contextualizes the accounts represented within the case study, then he argues that such de-contextualisation presents a limited guide to the phenomena being examined. Thus, in utilising triangulation techniques to qualify what is being stated, it is also important to ensure that the context of the situation is understood and also examined. This was achieved in the studies herein reported by an active exploration with other participants surrounding the emergent themes and the meanings and inferences given to these themes.

Fillis (2006) also highlights the difficulties of data interpretation though the limited timeframes often applied to research exploration. He suggests that time pressures constrict the meaningfulness of the data and therefore the interpretations emanating from the data. As Stablein (2006) notes, the lessons learnt from studying leaders, events or organizations are presumed to be informative for most organizational behaviour but he guards against the practice of unreflective generalization. Thus, conjoining triangulation methods with reflective and interpretive principles ensures that the outcomes of the research reflect the didactic nature of the research process (Stablein 2006). In the research here reported, conjoining triangulation was achieved by group analysis of the emergent themes and data types supporting these themes. In each case study, interventions were organised for group analysis of emergent themes. The process for each intervention will be examined in Chapter Seven.
The primary technique for data collection was the structured interview. Associated techniques to enhance the trustworthiness of the data gathered were minutes of meetings, organizational documentation, group learning experiences, anecdotal evidence from participants, researcher diary entries, organizational data results and selected company literature. In one case, participant personality profiles were also available. The intention was to select data from a wide variety of sources containing different biases, strengths, contexts, and purpose (following Creswell, 2006; Sheehan, 2000; Yin, 2003).

The case study approach has the advantage of supporting a triangulated research strategy. Stake (2005) defines triangulation as the protocols that are used to ensure accuracy and alternative explanations from the subject matter being examined. Yin (1984) advises that using multiple sources of data can ensure appropriate triangulation is achieved and this is supported by Snow and Anderson (1991) who assert that triangulation can occur with data, investigators, theories, and methodologies being utilised fully. As Stake (2005) comments, the case study approach optimizes understanding by using appropriate research questioning and by gaining credibility by a thorough triangulation of the descriptions and interpretations one discovers.

In case studies, within the context of the institutions in which the researcher has experience, there is an ease of availability of a variety of data sources within the context of the research subject. Data sources include the participants, meetings, structured interviews, minutes, policies, procedures, e-mail, and business communication. All forms of data were approved for use within the case studies.
examined in order to explore business phenomenon and gain understanding of experiences of practice.

The issue of applicability has appeared in the literature with regularity. It is a frequent criticism of case study research that the results are not widely applicable in real life. Yin (1984) in particular refuted that criticism by presenting a well-constructed explanation of the difference between analytic generalization and statistical generalization. He argued that in analytic generalization, previously developed theory is used as a template against which to compare the empirical results of the case study. The template can be used, therefore, to identify common themes rather than common location.

The case study approach then offers a practical solution to qualitative enquiry, an approach that starts with a socially situated researcher who moves from a research question or questions, to a theory, to the experiential world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In the research herein reported, collecting and analyzing empirical data was adopted by way of a systematic approach to interpretation, evaluation and presentation. This allows the researcher to control the multilayered perspective on the social phenomena being encountered in each case study. This approach is fully explained in Chapter 5 which deals with the methodological nature of the inquiry and the approach to data. The layers bind together, informing the exploration and delivering a schema from which interpretation can be made.

The significance of the case study approach is that research is undertaken in a real setting which is embodied by the interplay of subjects transacting their activities in
the context of the institutions in which they operate. A premium is therefore placed on
the ability of researchers to frame a research question in a concrete setting
(Greenwood & Levin, 2005). Of course, the researcher confronts a challenge of
identity in which the formulation of the question, the approach to the collaborators in
the research itself, and the identity of the researcher in the relational positioning of
'self' in narrating the case study experiences of 'self' and 'others' (Quattrone, 2006)
becomes paramount. Thus, ethical issues need to be addressed. Such considerations of
ethics in researcher action, experiences and testimony will be explored in Part Three
of this thesis.

No demonstration of the case study approach would be complete without
understanding the criticisms proffered by other schools of thought. Denzin and
Lincoln (2005) identify a 'widespread rejection of alternative forms of research' as
experienced by case study practitioners in many academic institutions today. This
experience is underscored by a preference towards quantitative approaches in an effort
to promote what are stated as 'conservative politics'. Particular concerns have been
encountered in the United States of America due to protection of human subjects and
the consequence that ethical considerations need to be delineated and encountered,
and for research to be consensually practised. It appears that debate in the area of
social science research centres on theory and methodology (Christians, 2005). The
National Research Council (NRC, 2002) report supported the principles for scientific
inquiry based on the ability to replicate findings of research and its generalizability
(Lincoln, 2005).
The rigour requested by the NRC report is achievable in case study approaches but as Guba and Lincoln (2005) identify, all paradigms must confront seven basic issues: axiology (ethics, truth, values); accommodation and commensurability (co-joinment of paradigms); action; control; foundations of truth; validity; and voice with reflexivity (summarised by Denzin & Lincoln 2005:184). Such epistemological concerns are understandable and notions of faithful representation (Quattrone, 2006) are critical facets of case study plausibility. However, case study approaches allow researchers to give voice to their co-participants, to unearth the themes emerging from understanding the action of doing, to explore and comprehend chosen modus operandi and to understand the implications for others. The notion of case study approaches moves beyond quantitative enquiry methodologies to one where the ‘other’ in the case is represented, narrated and comprehended (Quattrone 2006) in the action of real life situations.

The trustworthiness of the data, following Lincoln and Guba (1985), is established through making a distinction between First Order Findings, which indicate the terms, categories and concepts arising from the participants themselves, co-joined with the researcher’s theoretical interpretation and Second Order Findings stemming from the researcher’s triangulation of these concepts at a multi-relational and cross-case level of interpretation.

It is proposed that the case study approach offers the opportunity to explore the associations and connections that exist with the institutions participating in the research studies here reported and as they refer to the Research Questions. The approach in this research project is a case study examination of the nature and impact
of anxiety on senior management teams and the effects of anxiety on learning and change within these teams. Ethical and other epistemological concerns are addressed through study design and triangulation methodologies. This thesis reflects the three case studies undertaken within US owned, multi-national companies as follows: a medical device company (research undertaken 1999 to 2002), a software company (research undertaken 2002-2004), and a professional sound equipment company (research undertaken 2004-2007), as stated earlier.

3.4 Co-Operative Inquiry

The research takes the form of a co-operative inquiry embedded within each case study. The inquiry merges a number of models from different schools of thought in what Reason and Marshall (2001) describe as an undertaking of a set of general ideologies and investigatory approaches which can be adapted creatively to different research issues. Guba and Lincoln (2005) describe the approach as an interweaving of schools of through in order to allow for the assimilation of multiple points of view. This form of inquiry is deemed appropriate to the research context in preference to positivist, post-positivist, critical or constructivist paradigms as it requires a long term collaborative relationship with a group of people (Reason & Marshall, 2001).

Researcher action in other paradigms has been usefully summarised by Guba and Lincoln (2005) and is referenced here as a comparison against the researcher’s chosen methodology as follows. Positivism/postpositivism is based on researcher distance/disinterest in order to assure academic ‘rigour’. Critical theories view the researcher as an advocate and activist, with the associated issues linked to bias. Constructivism deems the researcher to be a ‘passionate participant’ and facilitator.
By contrast, in participatory inquiry the researcher becomes the primary voice manifesting through self-reflective action and influenced by theory, narrative, stories, and experiences.

The nature of the research and the author’s active engagement with the teams being studied fitted a methodology that was not centred in one ‘bounded paradigm’ such as the positivist and critical methodologies suggested above. What is important in the studies here reported is the social construction of the teams examined against a methodological framework that was flexible enough to make sense of the themes emerging from the inquiry, and to account for the meaning, values and interpretations tendered by individuals within group contexts. On the other hand, Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) assert that participatory research should also avoid accepting the suppositions and limitations of particular methods and techniques. They exemplify this assertion with a reference to the use of structured interviews utilised to convert participants’ views into numerical data, arguing that quantitative inquiry uses aspects of qualitative methodologies to inform their approach.

Situated in grounded theory, this approach allows the researcher to simultaneously gather data and analyse that data, with each step complimenting each other throughout the research process. Complimenting, in this case, means that data collection and analysis informs and refocuses attention on additional data analysis to inform the study. This complimentary usage allows the revisiting of emerging theories and concepts of analyses. Thus, grounded theory allows for redefinition and appraisal of emerging matters, processing concurrently with an analytical interpretation of the participants’ experience. As Charmaz (2005) states, this approach produces shared
benefits as the analytical focus of grounded theory expands and hones the scope of inquiry.

One of the core tenets of this type of inquiry is a concern regarding validity of outcomes. In particular, criticisms are raised regarding too much emphasis on the identification and documentation of participants' experiences or perceptions, at the expense of social activity (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005). While some researchers are prepared to encounter a tolerance for ambiguity (Stake, 2005), the researcher in this inquiry has utilized triangulation of data analysis in order to clarify meaning and experiences, and in order to verify the robustness of an observation or interpretation. This approach is also supported by the meaning given to individual experience within each case study, seen through the lens of interpretive interactionism and explained more fully in the next sub-section.

3.5 Interpretive Interactionism

Interpretive Interactionism was a useful method to clarify and explain the experiences of the managers engaged in the studies herein reported. The term, coined by Denzin (1989b), supplies a methodology which seeks to give meaning to the participants' experience, in this case of learning, offering a new platform for learning based on their evaluation of what is going on in the 'here and now' (Denzin, 1989b; Sheehan, 2000). The notion of 'interpretive' refers to the understanding of the experience of the participants as they encounter their work activities and associations with others. In these studies giving meaning to the interactions that co-exist in the system of work offers a platform on which to build new interpretations and ways of experiencing their social realities.
Interpretive Interactionism requires that the researcher locate their experiences within the social world of each participant or as Sheehan (2000) describes, within their own distinctive purpose. This requires a research approach which has the ability to connect the participant to their particular site of location, connecting experience with place, process and structures (Schatzki, 2005).

Levels of meaning may be supported beyond the immediacy of the individual experience, interpreted through layers of activities, processes, cultural inferences and individual perception (Denzin, 1989b; Sheehan, 2000) towards a collaborative approach to understanding shared experiences. Shared experience offers collective associations of experience, moving beyond the enrichment of the individual, to that of the group (Jones, Connolly, Gear & Read, 2006). In so doing, it moves beyond the boundaries of fact laden descriptors to that of interpretive collaborative inquiry that allows for a deeper interpretation of experience and meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In the studies herein reported, participants’ experiences of the world of work were presented as responses to structured interviews where they gave meaning to their interpretations of the facets of work activities. Where each of the studies permitted, collective processes were used to enable the interpretation of these meanings by means of group participation and reflective analysis. Individual experiences helped shape the interpretive nature of the inquiry and connected with individual interpretations to shape new learning opportunities for the individual and the group (Weick & Roberts, 1993). An interpretive interactionist approach enables a researcher to work with participants in the process of understanding their own realities and lends
itself well to the Action Research paradigm. This paradigm supports the development of interventions which aim to explore and understand the work experience, its meaning and its learning opportunities (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Stringer & Huxham, 2009).

3.6 Action Research

Action research is a term used to describe a variety of approaches which include a number of interventions designed to deliver practical transformation and advancement in knowledge (Heron & Reason, 2001). In this thesis, it is a form of collective, self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality of experience and to develop an understanding of their practice and the situations in which these practices are performed (Kemmis & McTaggart 2000). It is presented as a phenomenological methodology for researching a number of organizations' practices and processes (Eden & Huxham, 2006). It sits in partnership with ethnography, case study and the development of grounded theory (Eden & Huxham, 2006).

In this research paradigm information is not transacted between researcher and individuals, but collectively created with the researcher actively involved in the exploration of knowledge and understanding (Heron & Reason, 2001). The research becomes what Bishop (2005) describes as research which has direct meaning. As such, the use of action research in the current inquiry is both pertinent in terms of the context and developmental in terms of its application in expanding academic knowledge.
The key to successful Action Research is the interrelationship between the person, the problem, the group and the action (Pedlar & Boutall, 1992). Hence the person is integral to the solution. It is through their knowledge, beliefs, political influences and emotions that an evolution can occur in social interaction (Vince & Martin, 1993). Critical to this evolution is that the participant is developing individually in terms of self understanding and professional development (Elliott, 1991). The rational model allows us to build a cyclical process that addresses the context of the problem. Underlying this is the individual themselves who may feel threatened in some way about the actions required. Vince and Martin (1993) propose the model shown in Figure 3.1 below, which penetrates inside action learning and seeks to address the inherent anxiety caused by pressure on individuals to learn.

The integration of the emotional cycle encourages practitioner/action-researchers to explore whether the changes required are self-empowering or self-limiting from a personal perspective. Such explanation has much to do with the political environment of the studies here reported and as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, it is considered pertinent to explore this in order to have the desired improvement in quality of action. It is reasoned herein that the concept of action research supports the exploration of the inter-relationships between and within the individual, the group and the organization context. In these studies, the careful handling of the possible anxieties emerging from the learning experience was managed in individual and group events by a collective awareness of experience and the development of understanding between participants.
The approach taken to an action research investigation has a number of possibilities. The assumptions of the action-researcher will have fundamental implications for the methodologies utilized therein. It would appear that these fall into a number of schools of thought and are exemplified by Burrell and Morgan (1979) in their subjective-objective dimension, provided in Figure 3.2 below in conjunction with the approach taken in these studies herein reported for completeness.
At the ontological level, the approach would center on the assumption that on the nominalistic side, the social world external to individual cognition is nothing but a set of structural aspects that allow individuals to shape their world. At the other extreme, the external world exists as an empirical body that exists of its own and is as real as the natural world. In the studies herein reported, the researcher considers that organizational experience exists within the context of the here and now. It was important to understand the social realities of each participant, including the researcher, in order to give meaning and to explore understanding in each case study examined (following Raelin, 1999; Torbert, 1997).
At the epistemological level, a positivist researcher would approach research in a quantitative way, exploring hypotheses through experimental research and adding to the stock of valid and invalid research in the topic area. The antithesis of positivism, or the anti-positivist approach, rejects the standpoint of the isolated observer and seeks to understand social phenomenon from inside the participant action. In these studies, the research adopted a post-positivist stance, seeking to understand phenomena from the experience of the participants as part of the work group and therefore inside of the action. In action research, the implication for a study of social interaction would therefore infer a subjectivist approach.

Such an approach involves a strategy where knowledge is produced in the midst of action (Lewin, 1946). The goal here is to ensure that there exists congruence of learning on a multiplicity of levels: self knowledge, self action, social understanding, social knowledge and knowledge of others (following Peters and Robinson, 1984).

The human nature debate explores the dimensions of determinism in that man’s (sic) actions are consequential of the environment in which he/she finds himself/herself; and voluntarism, in that man (sic) is essentially autonomous and free willed. In these studies, an interweaving of viewpoints was essential in order to explore and examine notions of management behaviour, particularly in terms of notions of authority, control and autonomy to act. It was felt to be important that these notions were not bounded in one particular paradigm as exploration of the influences on these notions could be consequential of site of ontology, or systems, of culture, of processes, or individual behaviour.
In order to eliminate researcher interference, the researcher should operate as part of the group dynamic and focus on data and self-learning (Raelin, 1999). There is an issue of personal risk at the organizational level (McNiff, 1999) because this approach associates the researcher with a level of risk that depends on the organization culture, consequences of the research, participant ‘buy in’ and degree of organizational support.

At the methodological level, the researcher adopted an ideographic approach which appeared to be consistent with the qualitative nature of the research undertaken herein and the mode of inquiry adopted. The nature of the case studies and the context of the research indicated that due to the multiple, experientially based and socially constructed realities examined as part of each study, an ideographic approach was suited to the research approach.

These issues were addressed in the methodological approach to the studies reported herein by an attention to exploring multiple layers of enquiry at an individual, group and organizational level of analysis. In this way, data co-joins to support the emerging interpretations from what is experienced and removes the researcher as superior voice of research outcomes.

The weaknesses of the action research approach have been neatly summarized by Reason (1998), who identifies three of the problems, as follows. First, some action researchers operate in a detached, disconnected mode in relation to others in ‘the action’. Second, the researcher can become obsessed with action and ceases to do research. Third, one may end up with an interesting impressionistic case study, but not
a contribution to wisdom (Maxwell, 1984). McNiff (1999) adds to this list by stating that action research is political. Often a researcher will find him/herself at odds with the established system and consider that the actions may only be able to penetrate at the 'micro' area of personal practice and may not penetrate the 'macro' issues in the organization at large.

The researcher avoided the potential issues identified in the previous paragraph by utilizing a method of enquiry that sought to stratify the approach. Winter (1989) offers some assistance here by summarizing Kemmis' (1982) approach using an action/reflection method, as shown in Figure 3.3 below. The spiral allows the researcher to plan, act, observe, reflect and re-plan as the basis for problem solving and movement from one critical phase to the other. However, the approach does not allow the influence of related but dissimilar issues that may take the process off at a tangent. Stratification must operate on a three dimensional basis and allow flexibility of interpretation through what McNiff (1999) calls an understanding of the sub spirals that generate from the initial line of enquiry. Data gathering allows the researcher to monitor what is going on, so that any preliminary ideas can be checked and validated by those who participate in the enquiry.
Source: Adapted from Kemmis (1982) for the purpose of this thesis

Interpreting the above may assist action-researchers to avoid some of the pitfalls highlighted. The understanding which informs this thesis is that in order to avoid the detached observer scenario, it is beneficial for the researcher to adopt the position of a process guide and not consultant. The role of researcher is to understand the process by which individual and group comprehension develops for all, action-researcher included. In the studies herein reported the researcher is an active member of the group that is part of each situation and it is the collaboration of all members of the group that keeps the process going.

It was felt important in the research here reported to eliminate the potential for obsession with action which can arise if the action-researcher does not truly experience the self and professional development opportunity that this kind of enquiry allows. In these studies action arises when all group members, including the action
researcher, embrace the opportunity to understand and learn from the experience of inquiry.

It also was felt that in this research the political environment is best addressed through an open approach. As Kemmis (1982) states, researchers should ensure that all participants and relevant persons, committees and authorities have been consulted; that all participants must be allowed to influence the work, and those who do not wish to participate be respected; that permission is obtained before examining documentation; and the researcher must respect confidentiality. These standards were adopted in order to assist the researcher deal with the political context but will not address the political tensions that will inevitably surface themselves in this type of inquiry.

Obtaining permission, collaborating authentically, challenging and reflecting on what is being examined in the ‘here and now’ requires a rigorous process of enquiry and research legitimacy. At each stage of the process of this research, each participant was reminded of these aspects and collectively a list of guidelines was applied. These generally focussed on aspects such as ‘every opinion counts’, ‘treat every participant with dignity and respect’ and ‘focus on the issue, problem or concern and not on the person’, to name but a few (as shown in Table 3.1, page 78).

Much of the criticism of action research centres on the concern regarding its legitimacy as a vehicle for rigorous research outcomes. Ottoson (2003) sees action research as a way for a researcher to gain reliable, detailed and subtle data. As the outcomes have the potential to be meaningful to others, it was seen to be important
that the outcomes reflected the voice of the participants, together with the careful reporting of outcomes and consideration of the context which is a reliable indicator of future purposefulness. Careful reporting of outcomes means that it was necessary to ensure that ethical considerations were fundamental to the research approach.

I have examined the data sources available, the legitimacy of the data, its collection, analysis and validity. Throughout the action research undertaken in this study, the above principles were adopted, enacted and reflected upon within the organizational system. This will be discussed further as each case study is written and evaluated in part 2 of this thesis.

3.7 Summary of Epistemological and Ontological Approaches

In this chapter, I have considered the methodological approach and nature of the research design as it supports the pursuit of knowledge in relation to the Research Questions. Epistemologically, it is proposed that an interweaving of numerous schools of thought offers a plausible platform upon which to build the search for knowledge. This is because the nature of the research subject involved active participation in the lived experience of the participants and necessitated a more flexible paradigm than more structured approaches indicated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

From an ontological perspective, the journey of attaining knowledge in this research area centres on knowing from the perspective of realism, understanding organizational phenomenon from its existence in the here and now. Such pursuit of knowledge indicates that the ideographic approach should be based on qualitative interpretations, emanating from the research participants themselves (Lewin, 1946). Knowledge
therefore exists in the midst of action, within social realities and not bounded by a paradigm that has the potential to delimit the journey of exploration (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

It was also considered that various schools of thought may be method-linked because different ontological approaches may favour certain methods of analysis. It was considered that methods, like paradigms, are not necessarily or specifically related to techniques. Grounded theory may, for example, be generated by utilising a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques and sources (following Sandelowski, 2000). In these cases, ideographic approaches were felt best placed to evoke the reality of the individuals' experience of the research.

The next chapter introduces the process of discovery in the research and the procedures that were adopted in order to ensure data integrity. It also introduces the organizations and the participants. In so doing, it indicates that the research is embodied by the real experience of the organizations examined, evoking a synergy between what is researched, its context and the outcomes (Davis, 2007).
CHAPTER FOUR: Process of Discovery

4.0 Introduction

This chapter identifies the process of discovery in each case study starting with the Selection of the Study Sites, Participant Selection and the Data Gathering activities. Issues in relation to Ethical Considerations given to the research are contained at the end of the chapter. The process of discovery was grounded in procedures adopted to assist in stabilising the viability of participant relations as researcher and colleague. Interpretative approaches were supplemented by introducing notions of triangulation approaches both intra and extra case study.

4.1 Selection of the Study Sites

All of the organizations studied were confronted with heightened periods of change at the commencement of each of the case studies. The selection of the study sites was a consequence of the situation of the researcher who undertook permanent appointments in each case study organization at the time the research was undertaken. The studies included learning opportunities for the participants to develop their understanding of their responses to change, the associations and meanings given to the organizational contexts, and their opportunity to transform some conditioned behaviours developed as a reactions to change requirements.

In all case study organizations permission to undertake the research was given at a number of levels. Firstly, the head of business was approached to seek their agreement to undertake the research and approach the senior management team members. Secondly, the senior managers were approached individually by e-mail to ask them if
they would be willing to participate in the research. The e-mail explained that the data gathering process would start with a structured interview that could be completed via e-mail, or if they preferred, in conversation with the researcher. The purpose of the structured interviews was to gather their thoughts and experiences about their positions as senior managers within the company. Thirdly, the head of business was approached to gain acquiescence for access to other company information to offer additional information sources in which to gain further insight into emergent themes as the analytical phase evolved. Sources of information such as business results, market data, strategic business plans and access to minutes of meetings, provided contextual exploration and avenues for further research with the participants. These aspects supported the pursuit of knowledge as it related to the literature review, the context and the participants’ own experiences.

4.2 Participant Selection

The participants were members of each senior management team of the case study companies. Participation was optional, but participants were selected on the basis that they would offer the most extensive understanding of the research topic; thus they were a purposeful sample (following Park, 2001; Sheehan, 2000). Such purposeful selection was consistent with the information needed to inform the study. Marshall and Rossman (2006) identify four aspects of participant selection that are useful to note here. They are events, settings, actors and artefacts. In terms of the participants involved across the three case studies, each person was positioned to interpret and explore events arising, both in the group and organizational contexts. Table 4.1 below summarises the participants involved in this research.
Each person had a key role to play in the system of work and was therefore established within the contextual setting and action of the business in which they operate. Each person was able to give meaning to the artefacts presented within the research in order to inform the analysis and interpretation of events arising. Each was a key protagonist in the system of work and they were thus able to interpret...
individual, group and organizational considerations, as they held crucial positions of authority in the organizational hierarchy.

The probability that such participants could give meaning to the research subject matter was a consideration in participant selection. However, the likelihood that such perceptions would proffer insight into the research area would be dependent on the motivation they have for getting involved in the first place (following Eden & Huxham, 1998). The nature of action research meant that the participants would help shape the dimension of the group as it had the potential to evolve and create a new shape for the group itself (Bion, 1961; Ospina et al, 2004). In order for it to be a democratic process, it was important to establish boundaries in order to operate the process of discovery and in order to deal with the power relations that would inevitably subsist within the group itself.

In terms of sample size, Creswell (2006) identifies that in narrative research, there are many examples utilising one or two individuals and in grounded theory, between twenty to thirty individuals. In the research herein reported, the total number of participants was 25, which is consistent with Creswell’s (2006) threshold in order to develop a well informed theory.

Although the sample could be construed as relatively small, in real terms the participants represent the controlling interests of each organization studied, and therefore the data is laden with a richness to support the investigation of the research questions. As Park (2001) states, humans come together is order to form a common
entity (in this case, the senior management teams in the organizations studied) that is larger than its constitutional parts.

Given the nature of the inquiry, the case study approach and the impact that each senior management team had on the organizations studied, it was seen to be a homogenous group within each case and purposeful as comparators across each study. Some writers suggest the use of such purposeful samples is not unusual in research today (Creswell, 2007; Sandelowski, 2000). Creswell identifies that there is one potential down side to this strategy as the information and credibility of purposeful sampling has been questioned. In this thesis, the application of multiple cases offers the potential to expand an understanding of the phenomenon and a triangulated data model ensures that the purposefulness or otherwise of participant selection can be understood.

The aim of the studies here reported was to move beyond an understanding of management from a tactical, systems or organizing perspective to one which investigated the reaction to anxiety considerations and their implications for managers, teams and organizations. All managers participated freely in the study and their shared meaning was instrumental to the outcomes of the study. As Heron and Reason (2001) indicate, such an inquiry method can be an informative and transformative experience.

In each of the studies reported in this thesis, each participant was contacted separately by e-mail and asked if they would participate in the research. The Research Questions were outlined and it was explained that the information they provided...
would be kept in confidence and used only to inform the study and its subsequent
eexploration. They would be consulted as part of this process. It was explained to them
that they could withdraw at any stage of the research if they were not comfortable
with what was happening and that there would be no penalty for so doing. As action-
researcher, confidentiality was seen to be a critical aspect. Similarly, in my role as
Human Resources Director in each organization, there was a fear that such
information could be used to notify the head of each organization studied the views of
each of the participants on the context of work. Ethically, this was a critical point to
overcome and from a relational perspective important to solve (Hilsen, 2006).

Overcoming the issues of trust is an important aspect in research of the type herein
described (Elangovan, Auer-Rizzi & Szabo, 2007). Hilsen (2006) states the notion of
trust is critical to the aspect of human and social mutuality. Ethically, therefore, there
must exist an open responsibility from the researcher to the participants in the
research. As such, this principle of openness applied to the practice of the research
and informed my response to the confidentiality question. In engaging with this issue,
the confidentiality of their data was emphasised to all participants. The Head of
Company was also copied in on an e-mail to all participants so that they could see, at
least politically, that there was no attempt to coerce information from them for any
purpose other than that of the research being undertaken.

On the basis of a person-to-person mutuality perspective, openness was reinforced by
a discussion with each participant regarding their fears in this respect. This was a
useful dialogue which also indicated emergent anxieties within the research
framework, not least about the position of the researcher as custodian of personal
perspectives and data. This understanding was a useful learning point for me as it allowed me to confront the consequences of the chosen research approach.

The participants' experience and their interconnection with me as researcher and as colleague would continue to represent a methodological challenge. The opening up of constructs developing from the emergent themes exposed me as researcher to my own feelings and views, as well as those of the research participants. Such exposure represented a challenge of the unconditional nature of action researcher and a shared responsibility in the generation of action led knowledge (following Hilsen, 2006). This was addressed by the maintenance of a researcher journal whereby my own thoughts and feelings could be captured and reflected upon. Thus, I was able to learn from my own experiences and use those understandings in the group context to understand this experience in relation to self and others in the group.

4.3 Data Gathering

4.3.1 Approval and Accessibility to Data Sources

Due to the political nature of the work environment in which the studies were undertaken, approvals and access to data sources were best addressed through an open approach. Kemmis (1982) states that researchers should ensure all participants and relevant persons, committees and authorities are consulted. However, as identified by some writers, the experience of some researchers is that research projects have the potential to be frustrated by a lack of participants (Creswell, 1994; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Vallance, 2001). Controversies regarding rewarding participants and the suspicion attached to reward incentives as they may reflect in the introduction of uncontrolled bias (Mitchell, 1998) are also considerations. Some of these aspects may
diminish peoples’ readiness to open themselves to the questions and probes of face-to-face research (Vallance, 2001). In addition, there are gatekeepers in business environs who may stop research approaches at the first hurdle (Denscombe, 2002; Hayes, 2005). These may be formal because of their position in the hierarchy or informal at lower levels of the organization (Brewer, 2000; McGee, 1999).

The above issues can be somewhat problematic and may require perseverance, understanding and modified approaches in order to achieve access. In the studies herein reported, accessibility was freely given and participant agreement was initially universally received. Nevertheless, there was evidence of some covert resistance from some participants, one of whom questioned ‘why they should help gain the researcher a qualification’. Resistance required careful handling as the researcher emphasised the individual choice and the potential benefits for the participant in improving understanding of the senior management team relationships and how they learned. Overcoming research participant’s resistance therefore requires a conscious appraisal of context and social relationships that exist between researcher and participant (Adler & Adler, 2002; Vitus, 2008). All participants must be allowed to influence the work, and those who do not wish to participate must have their wish respected (Kemmis, 1982). These standards informed the research here reported and helped the researcher to deal with the political context.

The approach allowed for a combination of analysis stemming from a variety of data sources (Glossop et al, 1999; LeMay, 2001; Parahoo, 1997). In common with such approaches, the participants were active in the process of discovery, evolving a shared sense of meaning and reappraisal as the studies developed (Hilton & Pollard, 2005).
The process of discovery in terms of participant engagement will be expanded in section 4.5 which follows.

In terms of data collection and its treatment, there are many approaches in the literature towards this subject. Table 4.2 below summarises some of these approaches and the considerations when applying them in practice.

Each of the approaches in Table 4.2 stem from a particular way of seeing the world, for example, through the lens of researcher interpretation (Shaw, 1999); through the lens of data analysis (Yin, 2003); through the lenses of data patterns and interpretation (Stake, 2005); and through the lenses of data coding, storytelling and interpretation (Irvine & Gaffikin, 2006; Sheehan, 1994, 2004a). The process of data collection and treatment will be guided by which lens or lenses through which you prefer to see the world. In addition, that preference will guide the interpretation and presentation of ideas which is congruent with associations of validity in that approach or world view.

Each of the approaches summarised informed the research herein reported as they assisted in the development of the Data Analysis Model developed for the purpose of this thesis and shown in table 5.1 (page 136). Following Sheehan (1994) and Denzin (1989) the data collection and analysis was guided by the world views understood as part of the data literature review. Table 4.2 therefore gives context to that process which has informed the new Data Analysis Model.
### Table 4.2 Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Advocacy</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheehan (1994)</td>
<td>Data collection was interview based but with supplemental information as required to inform the study. Data analysis stems from Denzin's (1989) model, expanded to allow for reflection, reinterpretation and fluidity.</td>
<td>Analytical process is creative but requires analytical rigour.</td>
<td>Exploring and reframing could be added to the model, but its cyclical nature may be quite lengthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaw (1999)</td>
<td>Researcher is an instrument for data collection, integrated in the action. Emphasis on inductive data analysis, observing, cycling, linear process adoption.</td>
<td>Basis in grounded theory.</td>
<td>Limited research recycling, limited participant feedback loop The recycling was curtailed in preference for writing up the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yin (2003)</td>
<td>Emphasises need for analytical strategy, consisting of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing and combining qualitative and quantitative approaches.</td>
<td>Emphasis on analytical strategy, not just on use of tools and techniques.</td>
<td>Still left with doubts about the gaps in applying reflexivity in the model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stake (2005)</td>
<td>Recommends seeking patterns of data to develop issues; triangulating key observations and basis for interpretation; developing assertions or generalizations.</td>
<td>Based in case study approaches and experientially grounded.</td>
<td>A little too generalized. Benefits in disciplined personal and particularized experience but somehow lacks the rigour of other approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irvine and Gaffikin (2006)</td>
<td>Emphasis is on storytelling, context, reflexivity, researcher as semi-distant from action and a flexible research emphasis.</td>
<td>Framing, cycling, evolutionary nature of data interpretation, recognises limitations of participant interpretations.</td>
<td>Reliance on software ultimately closed the research process which was becoming unwieldy. It seems that context and story, in this case, was limited in preference for data order and categorisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source: Designed for the Purpose of this Thesis**

Of course, standards of validity are frequently questioned in terms of research outcome legitimacy or otherwise (Bradbury & Reason, 2001) and what constitutes good knowledge research and practice outcomes is a topic of much debate. What is consistent with most of the above approaches is a combination of reflection, with
action and with interpretation. As Bradbury and Reason mention, Participatory Action Research is still an emergent mode of inquiry and one which necessitates techniques of data interpretation which are able to evolve with the research itself. All this sounds a little idealistic and there is the potential here for the philosophical and practical consequences of ideology without control. Control stems from an adequate data analysis process which provides a system for interpretation and review.

In this way, concepts of ideology can be controlled by rigorous application of methodologies that gives order, form and critical reflection. As Atkinson and Delamont (2005) indicate, a proper disciplined approach must be applied to each datum and in doing so reflects the context of the action in which it resides. It is important, at least for them, that data does not reduce the story to one of the data points themselves but that the participants' connectivity is real and transparent in the process of understanding what is occurring.

The process of understanding is enabled through the use of an analytical approach which reflects the data, the participants' observations, and the situation and its reflections. Modification and outcomes are critical in good data design. Chapter Six clarifies the Data Analysis Process, including a model developed for the purpose of this thesis which supports the layers of analytical inquiry which it is anticipated will deliver a trustworthy and reliable testimony of the research itself.

4.4 Data Sources

I collected data from a number of sources including: Structured Interview via one-to-one interview wherever permissible, otherwise participants completed the interview
via e-mail; participant and non-participant observation; written and electronic
documentation; and a research journal (following Corley, 2004; Miles & Huberman,
1994). The interviews were the main source of data as these were considered to be
testimony to the experience of individuals in the here and now of lived experience
(Torbert, 1991). In addition, the other data provided a supplementary source of data
context and clarification, gaining additional perspectives on events, interpretations
and issues.

4.4.1 The Structured Interview

The primary technique for data collection was a structured interview, designed to
understand the possible causes of anxiety in the work context, and the possible effects
of anxiety on the work group. The structured interview was informed by a review of
the literature regarding possible causes of workplace anxiety. It was at this stage that a
quantitative survey was excluded, on the principle that quantitative outcomes would
not be able to represent or give meaning to the reality of participant experiences
(following Sobh & Perry, 2006).

The research purpose was to uncover the contingent causations of anxiety within the
context of management teams, in the action of carrying out their work activity in
organizations undergoing fundamental change. The need for prior knowledge and
continuous knowledge attainment throughout the data gathering and analysis phases
was seen to be essential in the didactic nature of theme generation and understanding.
As Sobh and Perry (2006) state, prior knowledge of subject matter can help clarify
additional evidence, anecdotal or otherwise, which supports intra-research
triangulation
The structured interview avoided the traditional Likert style scoring approaches, preferring a method which allowed for an openness of responses. As such, the structured interview was designed as a descriptive survey with the goal being to remain open to the potential causes of anxiety within the leadership teams of the organizations studied. In this context, the questions were kept open in order to fulfil the exploratory nature of its purpose, and to allow each participant full opportunity to describe their personal situation. As Gill and Johnson (1991) state, a descriptive survey is concerned primarily with addressing the particular characteristics of a specific population of subject for comparative purposes. The structured interview itself was developed from an initial mind map of the potential areas of questioning. Figure 2.1 page 18, Mind Mapping Anxiety Causation in Management Teams, represents the mind-map associated with the notions of anxiety in management teams, informed by the literature review and designed and reported for the purposes of this thesis. It was used to develop the questions for each case study structured interview.

It was important that the structured interview was not seen as onerous or time consuming initially. The design was driven by the need for a structured interview of less than 10 minutes completion time (this was a requirement of the participants prior to structured interview design) and questions that helped to provide answers for the research questions.

The questions were refined through the initial pilot and as Yin (2003) and Sampson (2004) identify, such practice allows for the development of relevant lines of questions. These pilot cases were based on a sample of 2-3 members of each senior management team at the beginning of each study. Their opinions were sought as to
the ease of understanding, the speed to complete and the relevance to the organization and their experience. In two of the three cases, these pilots resulted in either the requirement for modifications to words in the questions themselves or supplemental questions to reflect context and organizational arrangements. Under notions of control, some wished for boundaries of ontological site to be represented by the countries with which they associated their span of control.

Wherever possible, the structured interview formed the basis of a face to face interview which was audio recorded (via Dictaphone) if the participant approved, and then typed independently. A secretarial friend living some 200 miles away, who had no association with the business or the research aim, typed the transcripts from the audio recordings. I felt it was an important methodological issue that transcripts were typed independently for the participants themselves to modify and return to me for editing. I considered that ownership of their contribution to the research was essential for maintaining effective research design.

Where an interview was not possible, as executive diaries were often difficult to match, the structured interview was then conducted in isolation, with responses written by the participants themselves with e-mail or telephone follow up, in those cases. Ownership still rested with the participants and they controlled the extent of response and the time taken to complete the structured interviews.

The interview themselves, where appropriate, were arranged in neutral surroundings. Neither the researcher’s office not the participant’s office were deemed appropriate as this has connotation of a power relationship which I felt had the potential to bias the
answers to the research questions (following Kvale, 2006; Weis & Fine, 2000). Interviews were arranged either in one of the small meeting rooms or in a number of cases outside of the work context in a local hotel coffee area. It was recognised that there existed what Creswell (2006) describes as an asymmetrical power distribution, as there was seen to be a potential for the researcher as interviewer to dominate or steer the discussion. Such recognition sensitised the researcher to seek a neutral environment and position to interview each participant and to conduct the interview more as an informal chat between peers around a framework of ideas for exploration.

As Yin (2003) suggests, the case study interview should encompass the researcher having enough probity without influencing the question outcome. In reality, this means that as action-researcher, with knowledge of the case itself, it was important that any subsidiary questions to those contained within the structured interview were asked as 'how' questions, as opposed to 'why' which could create defensive answers (following Creswell, 2006).

The researcher maintained self discipline by avoiding giving her answers to the same questions when cross challenged by the participant. In one case the participant asked whether I thought that there were hidden agendas in the team. I explained that my view would be captured in the creation of themes emerging from the structured interviews and that I was very interested in what they had to say about it. By gently reminding the participant of my interest in their experience of interpretation of the questions raised, I became conscious of the implications of open acceptance/rejection of participant view points and the potential to influence others as action researcher.
The interviews were recorded by using the structured interview as protocol, combined with a pre-designed form to capture responses. The protocol is provided in Appendix 6. As suggested by Asmussen and Creswell (1995), such a protocol can assist a researcher to categorise and theme responses by having a structured sheet to work from. I found this form particularly useful in compiling themes.

In two of the case studies, gaining access to all participants for one-to-one interviews was not possible due to travel commitments or workload. In these cases the interview was completed remotely by the participants and followed up by telephone call where needed.

4.4.2 Observations

Participants were aware that I would be examining the ways we interacted with each other in normal working conditions. They were informed at the outset of the study that the researcher would continue to record aspects of management behaviour as a testimony to the themes generated. At first managers were very conscious of this caveat and would say things like ‘I hope you jotted that down’ or ‘there’s a good example of a hidden agenda’. Over time, however, managers became less conscious of this condition. As action researcher, I was also conscious that I was not a bystander in the proceedings. During management meetings, away-days and intervention programs, I manually recorded the major activities, events, and discussion points, as well as my own feelings and views about what was occurring.

Participant observation is a topic of much discussion and one which centres on the ethics of the inquiry focussing on the role of participant observer (Schein, 2001). The
researcher defines the process but it is the participants themselves who are involved in gathering and analysing the data. However, the role of action-researcher can be problematic insofar as the action-researcher creates interventions along the way, for example structured interview data, which has the potential to stimulate a particular way of seeing the world or questioning assumptions. This may itself prove consequential to the participants and thus it is critical that research design allows for the capture, exploration and analysis of such phenomenon (Schein, 2001). As such, I asked a number of group members for their opinions about these events, cross checking with my own interpretation of situations. Cross checking allowed for the contemporaneous reflection and insight caused by re-interpreting what had been observed.

As Tedlock (2005) identifies, participant observation calls for the reflection upon, and critical evaluation of, the nature of relationships within such practice. Thus, participant observation, connection and joint review dictates that this type of research is collaborative in its nature. There was recognition that teams work together in interaction to combine a shared sense of purpose, recognising that each one lives with the actions of another (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Thus observation becomes a vehicle for further analysis, one which has the potential to add to the experience of the participants themselves, and the self-awareness of the researcher.

As Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) identify, participatory action research is a critical approach to understand the inter-actions, interpretations and didactical nature of the research process. True rigour and trustworthiness is guided through the process of participant validation. Participant validation elicits feedback from those being studied.
and commentary on whether the account and interpretations are an accurate account
and understanding of what has transpired (Angrosino, 2005; DeTardo-Bora, 2004).

Judah and Richardson (2006) also concern themselves with the nature of the action
researcher and the struggle between participation and collaboration. They identify the
open ended nature of participatory research, one which is unable to dictate up front
the likely or potential outcomes to the research efforts. Thus, the research approach is
evolutionary, one which is shaped by the participants themselves. These ideas inform
the research reported herein.

4.4.3 Documentation

Due to my role within each organization in which the research was undertaken, I had
access to organizational documentation, media and various literature types. Most of
the documentation was not in the public domain but represented minutes, memoranda,
monthly reports, e-mails and newsletters covering internal business activities. Public
documentation included the sets of Company Reports for each company, marketing
literature and public relations literature.

This data framed the context of the research and helped provide evidence of the
culture of the business, which was indicative of the pressures managers were facing. It
has been argued that business environments are socially constructed and these items
reveal the social context of the organizations studied and reported herein (Gergen,
2003). This documentation also reveals the language of the work situation which
evokes its sense of identity. It is within this identity that the events and actions of the
participants in these studies are framed. As Schatzki (2005) identifies, these identities
represent the site of ontology and influence the participants’ understanding of their situation.

4.4.4 Research Journal

A research journal can offer additional insight into the personal and implicit processes which activities create (Borg, 2001; Davis, 2007). Borg highlights the merits of such journals as offering opportunity for promoting and understanding professional activities and personal pathways for growth. Borg cites Maxwell (1996) whereby journals are deemed to be a good place to start the reflexive practice, allowing discovery and meaning to evolve in the process of recording an event or activity. These benefits are supplemented by Malacrida (2007) who emphasises the importance of the researcher journal as indicative of the values, histories and social location of the researchers themselves. The position of the researcher is implicit in the interpretations, analysis and methodological approaches to the research topic and therefore it is argued that the journal offers plausibility to the narrative recorded in this thesis.

I started the research by maintaining a research journal which was used to record events, feelings, thoughts and activities that stood out for me in the period of research. Journal entries were anticipated as being an aid to the research in so far as these phenomena could be recorded quickly and contemporaneously to events arising. Thus entries would be able to support the statements of events occurring in the research and provide an ‘aide memoir’ of activities to be recalled later in writing the thesis.
Such journals not only represent the storage of information to be retrieved in reviewing the events of the research process, but also the potential causations, reflections and instructive insights into the reality of the situation contemporaneous to that situation (Malacrida, 2007). The journal benefited the case study approach used in this research by providing additional layers of recall and understanding. In addition, Janesick (1998) highlights the benefits of journal writing as a tangible way to 'evaluate our experience, improve and clarify one's thinking' (p.24). These are some of the notions that informed my use of the journal and its assistance in clarifying events and situations in writing this thesis some time after the events had arisen.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The process of exploration which attempts to discover notions of anxiety in Senior Management teams studied may have a fundamental impact on the effectiveness or otherwise of the implementation of strategies. Therefore, a number of ethical considerations were examined prior to the research commencement which has informed each stage of the research process.

Gini (1998:362) defines ethics as an 'attempt to work out rights and obligations we have and share with others', and thus is seen to be a collective exercise. In co-operative inquiry, the philosophies and rigour under-pinning the methodology are different, and often in dispute, with the more accepted paradigms derived from the scientific method (Dunn, 1998). The main concerns are often philosophical and methodological.
The collective experience necessitates a collective agreement of the principles enacted between and towards others in the research process (Gini, 1998). Ensuring that the ethical principles are enacted and that the sharing of knowledge is a collaborative experience assists in limiting the potential of researcher bias, as control is with each participant in the enquiry. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state, in order to avoid ethical problems the case study researcher needs to receive constant input from their own conscience, from the stakeholders in the business, and from the research participants. The participatory process, therefore, ensures that the knowledge outcome accurately reflects the group perspective because the process of engagement with others offers opportunity to reflect on interpretation, to engage with others in knowledge assimilation, and to steer a new path of understanding.

However, such action research approaches are not without difficulty. Barazangi (2006) identifies that the paradoxical nature of research as self-evaluation of the researcher does not constitute co-participant identity. Feeding back such insight from researcher to the larger group may cause tensions or conflicts and a changed perspective of researcher rigour. The collaboration effort may result in stakeholder challenges as the researcher becomes open to questions from others and moves away from the role of expert in such teams. Barazangi (2006) therefore advocates an ethical process which identifies the action researcher not as an expert in the research, but as an equal partner in a journey to give meaning to individual and group experiences.

This understanding helped me to frame my terms of reference for each participant. It was emphasised to all participants at the outset of the research that the research process was a collective journey. One unanticipated outcome was that others actively
sought my input about opinions and views on work situations when I had taken a more observational stand point. Keeping this journey in balance was occasionally difficult as the desire to capture all that was arising inevitably created distance from action in the here and now.

The primary goal of the research is to gather pertinent, reliable and collaborative (where appropriate) data in order to understand the situation in Senior Management team experiences. These experiences are transactional and brought to collective awareness. This conceptual framework allows the research question to explore these notions of anxiety within the individual and group context, in so much as they affect change at individual, group and organizational level. The application of ethical principles ensures the appliance of the research methodology with responsibility and rigour.

The consideration of ethics is incomplete without a consideration of the trustworthiness of data interpretation and the presentation of datum in reporting the results of the research. The next section draws on issues of validity in data reporting and introduces a new model for cross case study validation.

4.6 Triangulation

There have been references in this thesis to the principles of data triangulation as a way of looking at a situation from more than one perspective in order to provide researchers with a more complete understanding of the phenomena. Triangulation was suggested by Denzin (1978) as a way to gain knowledge of a single empirical reality. The principle stems from the belief that if different data lead to the same conclusions,
our faith in the trustworthiness of these conclusions is increased. The approach developed for the purpose of the research reported in this thesis, is summarised in Figure 4.1 below.

**Figure 4.1 Data Triangulation – A Three Case Study approach**

*Source: Developed for the purpose of this thesis*

Figure 4.1 Data Triangulation – A Three Case Study Approach represents the tenet of the inquiry herein reported through data treatment, exploration and interpretation – both individual and in teams. It is envisaged that the meanings associated with the themes presented in the inquiry will be well-founded in association with the phenomena being investigated. Meaning is then given congruence intra-study and extra-study, the latter meaning a comparison with those emanating from other case studies in the enquiry to understand the relevance of meaning to each respective case. From this process (the yellow arrows emanating into the green oval), the associations,
linkages and commonalities between the experience of diverse cases may be understood. Each of the terms used in the model are now explained in some detail.

**Evidence** stems from the initial concept of the research approach. Literature informs and guides the formulation of research typography, methodology and action. Evidence intra-case study is accumulated from a variety of sources (see section 4.5 above). Triangulation, in this case, is about a questioning of assumptions and a search for commonalities of understanding (Ravitch & Wirth, 2007). This exists intra-case and between case by comparing the emergent themes, associations and interpretations between studies. Thus, a new understanding of the experience of managers in a number of companies emerges (Dooley, 2002). This understanding may be indicative of the experience of managers in similar sized organizations. Different perspectives support the next phase of analysis.

**Exploration** offers the opportunity to explore the context of data accumulation. As Pawson and Tilley (1997) indicate, triangulation in the exploration phase of research offers a number of potential answers to cover each contingent context. Associations whether they are single or group fostered, simple or complex in reality, proffer the researcher and the participants in the research an opportunity to question and explore associations of experience (Dooley, 2002). Such exploration was feasible for participants in case studies two and three, who were able to compare the results of their understanding with that of the previous case(s). In so doing, exploration intra and extra case permits the consideration of alternative or similar experience in developing a richer understanding of knowledge (Chandler & Torbert, 2003). In so
doing, each participant has the opportunity to learn beyond the immediacy of their current experience.

**Interpretation** is the next phase of applying meaning towards agreed understanding. In co-operative inquiry an agreement of interpretive outcomes is important in order to ensure the legitimacy of outcomes (Beukema & Valkenburg, 2007). Agreement in these cases may exist intra-case, as in case study one; or within and external to the specific case, as offered in case studies two and three respectively. Trustworthiness here extends beyond the knowledge of self and the site of ontology towards an appreciation of others experiences and ontological influences.

Congruence in data is difficult and in case studies of this nature, fraught with difficulty. As Maggs-Rapport (2000) identifies, triangulation enables the researcher to carry out research in a rigorous manner. Rigour helps to surmount the enigma of subjectivity, as usefully identified in Ladkin's (2005) argument that explores the role of subjectivity and objectivity intertwining in order to create validity in terms of the interdependency of meaning and truth. Such intertwining is more prevalent in action research inquiry where the researcher must seek to understand the role that they play in the inquiry being undertaken (Ladkin, 2005). The extent to which 'truths' emerge are questioned from a stance of awareness of the researcher's own subjective bias in interpretation.

In the research here reported subjective conditioning or bias is cross checked by an openness of interpretation, the opportunity for all participants to engage with the phenomena being examined, and with new interpretations encouraged to evolve (First...
Order Findings). Second Order Findings which apply as a process of triangulation within case and across case allow for the clarification of themes and dimensions arising from theoretical researcher interpretations and the participants' experience at a higher level of abstraction (following Corley, 2004).

4.7 Summary

In this chapter I have considered the selection of participants and the procedures adopted that ensured the ongoing viability of the relationships as researcher and colleague. I have explained the data gathering process and identified a number of emergent issues arising in the research. These issues were largely addressed by following Reason (1994, 1999) and implementing these considerations in the research design. I have contextualised the data collection process and shown how different ways we see the world shape the adoption of data collection processes. The data types used in the study were introduced by exploring their viability as legitimate approaches to this type of research. Ethical considerations have been adopted as part of the principles of practice in approaching the research topic and notions of triangulation intra-case and extra-case were offered as avenues which offer additional layers of interpretive approaches.

The next part of the thesis introduces the data gathered in each case study and its treatment.
PART 2

METHOD

There are two chapters to this part of the thesis. Chapter Five describes the process of Data Analysis for each case study and reviews issues of data gathering in each case context. Chapter Six details the Case Study Data and Analysis.

The nature of the data gathering process utilised in this study occasionally resulted in the need to address some methodological issues not envisaged at the outset of the study and that were seen to emerge as part of the process of inquiry. The study was therefore, in part, shaped by the nature of inquiry and the experiences seen to emerge which impacted upon the methodological nature of inquiry. Thus, an occasional reassessment of some parts of the study process was required. In particular, such reassessment was seen to relate to those occasioned by replication of earlier case study approaches in different cultural environments. Reassessment is indicated where appropriate throughout the relevant chapters.
CHAPTER FIVE Data Analysis

5.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the processes used to analyse the data that were gathered to answer the research questions. The analysis was informed by a number of approaches to data analysis which are represented in table 5.1, Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis, below. A new model is developed following Denzin (1989b) and Yin (1994) which merges together their two approaches to create a model which uses the bracketing, construction and contextualisation aspects of interpretive interactionism, with the cyclical and reflexive nature of the case study analysis approach.

The aim of the analysis was to identify associations emerging from the exploration of participant experience and organizational phenomenon which offered opportunities for collective understanding. It was important that data analysis was able to identify the experience of individuals in a way that did not remove the distinctiveness of that experience. That is to say, the process of data analysis needed to preserve the unique experience of the individuals, as well as the collective understanding of what analysis meant for these individuals.

The model represented in Figure 5.1, Data Analysis Model below, is a series of steps which overlap and reflect back on themselves in a developmental process of analysis. The cyclical nature of the model is difficult to represent in one dimension and for the purpose of understanding is represented as a linear activity which approximates the order of activity as it occurred. Consideration should be given to the organic nature of this model as it triggered opportunities for re-evaluation and reflection of discovery.
This required additional review of data sources to understand experience as represented by the analytical process. The nature of the model’s flexibility is represented by the curved arrows in the model denoting opportunities for further consideration and evaluation.

5.1 Data Analysis

As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) point out, qualitative researchers are more likely to encounter and confront the limitations of everyday life, describing a world in which the researcher seeks a wide range of interpretive methods which are interconnected. Such a wealth of data means that there is a need to focus on ways of managing and interpreting this variety of datum. Denzin and Lincoln’s advocacy of a variety of strategies to understand the data repeats their earlier work in 1994 where they described the researcher as ‘bricoleur’ (literal translation from the French is ‘handyman’). The types of data affect the possibilities when one comes to analyse what is present, as ‘bricoleur’. The researcher should be adept at applying a variety of techniques to ensure the adequate examination of each datum or each emergent theme/concept.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) identify that things are not as simple or as handy as Denzin and Lincoln’s earlier work reveals. Analysts can create new problems by over-analysing what is presented, rather than seeking meaning and problems from those participating in the study and the context in which the study exists. As Coffey and Atkinson propose, the process of analysis should not be seen as a distinct part of research. Rather, it is a reflexive activity that should inform data collection and after
reflection, further data collection. They argue that analysis is part of the research process and as such is of a cyclical nature.

So, interpreting data may be seen to be fraught with difficulty. Nonetheless, there is a wealth of literature identifying approaches to qualitative data analysis. For completeness, table 5.1, Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis, summarises some of the approaches to such analysis.

### Table 5.1 Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Advocacy</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denzin (1989)</td>
<td>Data analysis derives from bracketing, construction, contextualising, phases of interpretive interactionism.</td>
<td>Emphasis on a joining of structured and interpretive approaches</td>
<td>Context could be difficult to explore fully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dey (1993)</td>
<td>Analysis involves the breaking down of data in terms of identifying and linking analytical categories with 3 related processes: describing, classifying and connecting</td>
<td>In principle, analysis should be logical and developmental.</td>
<td>Dey was an advocate of computerised data analysis and sees data analysis as a set of sub processes which are distinct, clear and identifiable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolcott (1994)</td>
<td>Prefers to see data being transformed to deliver different outcomes. Interpreting data is about description, analysis and interpretation.</td>
<td>Data analysis is about extending and expanding data beyond pure description.</td>
<td>Wolcott comes across as a creative artist, where interpreting data becomes an imaginative process, evolving in a somewhat organic fashion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yin (1994)</td>
<td>Identifies a number of common characteristics – analysis should be both cyclical and reflexive; the analytical process should be comprehensively systematic, but not rigid; data are segmented and related to the whole; data is organised.</td>
<td>Analysis is inductive and data led.</td>
<td>Data leads the interpretive position but may be restrictive if individual/group interpretation is not open. In other words, the reflexive process may be delineated by the presentation or over-reliance of the data itself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Developed for the purpose of this thesis*
The above table presents a useful synopsis of data treatment methodologies which have inculcated the development of a new method of data analysis presented in this thesis. These approaches therefore informed the handling of the data in methodological design. Denzin (1989) and Yin (1994), in particular, offered aspects of analytical approaches which guided the development of the new Data Analysis Model shown in figure 5.1 below. A design which combined ideas and concepts from each approach co-joined towards an amalgamated approach to data analysis. In these studies the data treatment is best summarised diagrammatically, as shown in Figure 5.1, Data Analysis Model.
### Figure 5.1 Data Analysis Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Congruence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structured interview</td>
<td>Using a static structured interview across all case studies. The same</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>questions ensure consistency of interpretation, in context. Data Coding</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>results into emergent themes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Data Coding into emergent themes</td>
<td>Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minutes of Meetings</td>
<td>Data Coding into emergent themes</td>
<td>Codifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Learning</td>
<td>Exploring and examining emergent themes, re-evaluating themes, cross</td>
<td>Contextualising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences</td>
<td>referencing or recoding as appropriate</td>
<td>Comments, Events and stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdotal Evidence</td>
<td>Coding, reviewing exploring with participants, re-evaluating, recoding</td>
<td>Theme Creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>as appropriate</td>
<td>Theme adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Journal</td>
<td>Coding, identifying themes.</td>
<td>Exploration &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychometric Profiles (where</td>
<td>Reviewing group dynamics, summarising personality strengths and possible</td>
<td>Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>available)</td>
<td>cases of tension, coding.</td>
<td>Researcher and Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Developed for the purpose of this thesis*
The above model indicates the phasing of the data analysis process which for the purposes of explanation will follow the linear arrangement represented by the flow diagram under the heading of Congruence in Figure 5.1. Congruence is a way of looking for similarities in themes from multiple sets of data, both integral and external to each case study (Cresswell, 2006; Yin, 1994).

Congruence is supported by the application of a methodological approach towards data treatment which is consistent with a robust analytical technique. The central processes of data collection, codifying, contextualising, theme generation, followed by exploration and information, group voice and ultimately interpretation, are supported in parallel by other reflexive processes. These processes are termed Understanding on the left side and Reflection on the right side of the congruence column.

5.2 Reflection and Understanding

At each stage of the data treatment process, moments of reflective thinking were consciously engaged by the researcher and later in the study by groups. This process was followed in order to check assumptions, contexts and meanings. Following these processes ensures that understanding is informed by what could be termed a considered approach.

In addition, reflective moments offer the opportunity to change the shape of theme and interpretation in a controlled manner. Reflection becomes integral to the analytical process and becomes an opportunity to question, cross-validate, compliment, explore and review what is being interpreted and understood. As
Atkinson and Delamont (2005) state, the goal is to seek principled relationships in data analysis by paying heed to the systemic relations amongst the datum being explored.

5.3 Data Treatment

In describing the treatment of data, there were a number of overlapping activities that for the purposes of this thesis are written as if they were discrete phases of activity. Although Figure 5.1 indicates that the process was primarily a linear one with opportunities for recycling within and between each phase, it proved to be a much more dynamic, interactive, didactic and occasionally frustrating process. Constant iterations were required as individual, group and organizational realities were revealed and it was necessary for me to continue to review constantly the data sources available both intra-organization, extra-organization and as new literature emerged on the topic. In particular, this became more important over the length of the study as more interest grew in the area of action research.

The analysis was developed from a number of data types and helped create the process designed for the purpose of these case studies. I should state that the process of data analysis did not commence until an understanding of the organizations studies had evolved. The early stages involved a huge amount of ad hoc data gathering through meetings, anecdotal information, key events, journal entries and business performance indicators. Once I had accumulated an amount of data and explored the literature, it was only then that analysis started as a conscious process. To do so, I followed the steps now described.
5.3.1 Codifying

Firstly, I gathered the diverse amounts of data accumulated in the first six months with each company, filing and codifying the contents. Following Dey (1993) and Yin (1994), each data type was classified, described and coded into initial categories. These categories stemmed from the mind map (Figure 2.1, page 16) I had developed in considering the research subject and was manually based. An index was maintained of data type, sub type and connection to literature theme. Data type followed a simple description of the material including company minutes, notes from meetings, memorandum, newsletter, corporate information, journal entry and e-mail extract. Sub types stemmed from a codification of emergent themes. Following Cresswell (2007) sub types were limited to a short list (14) which epitomised my original mind map, together with my reading on the subject. These are detailed in Table 5.2, Data Codification below.

**Table 5.2 Data Codification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub Type</th>
<th>Short Hand Code</th>
<th>Sub Type</th>
<th>Short Hand Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>An</td>
<td>Inadequacy</td>
<td>In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>Av</td>
<td>Insecurity</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame</td>
<td>Bl</td>
<td>Mistrust</td>
<td>Mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collusion</td>
<td>Co</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Pl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Com</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Po</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>DB</td>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transference</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Developed for the purpose of this thesis*
The sub types were then collated as general themes, which were seen to represent the aggregation of sub types into clusters of ideas to generate a category of similar or connected types (following Stake, 1995). These themes were then linked to published research papers. As shown in Figure 5.1, this was a cyclical process and allowed for the emergence of new codes as new insights or discoveries emerged in the data analysis process.

Initially, this was a manageable form of data retrieval but over the nine years of the research, I accumulated an enormous amount of material, indexes and storage boxes, accounting for a small room containing boxes of material with their associated interlinks. As Sheehan (2000) identified, qualitative researchers have been increasingly turning towards computerised forms of data analysis and there may be some merit in that process, considering the self discipline, space and manual accuracy necessary to maintain the research process over a long term study. The benefits of spreadsheets, downloads and scanned documentation has been learned the hard way.

5.3.2 Contextualising

Data codification offered an initial categorisation for the data. The next stage was to consider the context of the data retrieval and its relevance to the research questions. In terms of context, a study of this nature necessitated an interpretation of the participants' experience (including the researcher through my research journal) and to refine the emerging themes from those experiences. Some of the statements used by the participants to assist me with the process included: 'I don’t understand why I need to change, my division is successful, you need to focus your attention on division x, who have not got a clue'[Linda – MDC]; ‘It’s easier to agree with the MD, that way
he leaves you alone to get on with it’ [Mary-MDC]; ‘I’m not comfortable raising the issues when everyone else is there, they will think I haven’t got a brain or something’ [Tim – TSC]; ‘We achieve the goal, let’s focus on that, this is just unnecessary’ [Paul-PSEC]. Such statements allowed for context to be applied to what otherwise could be a dry and lacklustre process. This allowed for data to be reflexive and connected to the whole (following Corley, 2004; Yin, 1994).

Documentation that was gathered about the organization during the period of study was assimilated and categorised under annual reports, marketing material, employee newsletters, minutes of meetings, policies and procedures, and e-mail exchanges. The latter proved to offer an additional layer of information around use of language and evidence of defence behaviours adopted by some staff. The practice of copying superiors and US company members was endemic in one of the organizations and was evidence of what one manager described as ‘the crazy politics that go on in this company’ [James – PSEC]. Another participant commented, ‘what the hell all these people want to know about this for beats me’ [Lucy – PSEC]. It was interesting to note the reaction of some of the participants to e-mail. They adopted a practice of interpretation based on whether they were in the ‘To:’ line of the e-mail or the ‘cc’. More interesting for them was the inclusion as a ‘bcc’ which was a silent copy to others with receivers not seeing which other persons were copied into the message.

The inclusion of e-mail became an important indicator of notions of anxiety as they subsist in the communication exchanges between individuals and groups. Such information helped to develop notions of context and the individual experience of
others undergoing change. The revisiting of these data types increased understanding and, as such, assisted in the development of emerging themes.

5.3.3 Theme Creation

Theme creation was easier once the codification and contextualisation of data was complete. What emerged was a transparent set of related issues which supported the mind map completed at the early stages of the research in terms of possible themes. This was co-joined with a re-appraisal of the literature and recoding and re-classification as the didactic nature of the study emerged. Theme creation in this way moved beyond the automated processes offered by software theme creation towards an interconnection between the relationships, contexts and associations involved in the interpretive process (Sobh & Perry, 2005).

As highlighted by Dembrowski and Hammer-Lloyd (1995), such automated theme programmes are only able to read text properties of data and have no ability to interpret the data itself. Thus, electronic forms of theme creation were considered but rejected as part of the process of data analysis. Theme creation evolved therefore from combining the codification and contextualisation of the datum into headings which represented the summary of the related underlying issues.

5.3.4 Exploration and Information

Exploration and new information and insight from group review ensured that the developing aspect of the data analysis process would permit reinterpretation and revaluation of the initial themes. A collective consciousness of interpretation through
interaction, collaboration and exploration ensured the integrity of the emergent group voice (following Sheehan, 2000).

5.3.5 Group Voice

Group voice became transparent as the themes were questioned, discussed and explored in context. Individuals were confronted with their own comments heard through the vehicle of group processes which allowed for a safe exploration of experience. In real terms, no one individual was forced to state their own opinion and view if they did not wish to do so. Neither were they able to conceal the experience of group voice. Group voice was not imposed upon the researcher but rather followed their opinion or view in a process of joint evaluation and connection to the context of events (Quattrone, 2006). The methodological framework of data analysis allowed for the interpretations of group voice to be reflected within the group and re-evaluated.

5.3.6 Interpretation

Interpretation was permitted intra and extra case studies, following case study one, by the tractability of group experience and the convergence of themes across boundaries of time, place and organization. Initial interpretation, therefore, centred upon the individual case within its context and particular associations at individual and group levels (First Order Findings). Cross case study analysis involved examining themes across cases to discern those themes that are common to all and allowing for a theoretical interpretation of participants' experience across cases (Corley, 2004; Creswell, 2006) (Second Order Findings).
5.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the approaches to data analysis and treatment adopted in the studies herein reported. I began with a review of data analysis procedures advocated by a number of authors and introduced a new Data Analysis Model, designed for the purpose of this thesis. This model contained aspects of data management and the process adopted in the treatment of the data itself and the way it was classified, interpreted and understood. Aspects of interpretation intra and extra case study were introduced as part the data treatment process.

In the next chapter, I will expand upon the concepts introduced here and provide the analysis of material gathered in each case study examined as part of this research.
CHAPTER SIX Case Study Data and Analysis

6.0 Introduction

This chapter increases the process of discovery, adding to and clarified by the literature review to explore and examine each of the three cases. Each case study provides material to explore the effects of anxiety in work teams and on learning and change on an individual, management and organizational level of analysis. The primary goal is to search for further meaning and clarification of the subject of this thesis. It is therefore presented in three parts as each case study unfolds in chronological order and in sequence of the events as they arise.

Throughout each study, I make reference to the literature with appropriate additional insights referenced where they arise. I felt it was important to highlight new routes of discovery and meaning as they occurred in the course of reflection as the events arose in each study. Reflection offered additional insights and action to the potential causes and interventions in addressing the phenomena being experienced.

As such the cases not only add to clarification, but also offer the opportunity to probe further into literature and discourses on the topic areas. Such probing expanded my knowledge and interpretation of the phenomena.

6.1 Case Study One: MDC

Starting in a new company meant that I was able to enjoy a phase during the first twelve months or so of employment of what is colloquially referred to as the ‘honeymoon period’. This means that I was enjoying a period of newness. With no
previous history in the company I was in a position to ask searching questions, to explore and challenge assumptions with a fresh perspective. I was thus able to observe situations, examine the stories of others and develop insights into group relations and individual accounts of their experiences, without any preconceived ideas or biases. This period in any new position, and particularly when poised to explore the research questions formed as part of this research study, is an opportunity to embrace those elements of value-free social science to produce useful research of the subject matter.

The exploration of the first case study therefore started with my first management meeting. The monthly management meetings and associated events offered a useful data source through which management behaviour could be tracked and key issues identified. Through the period September 1999 to September 2002, I participated in, made notes of, and reflected upon the meetings. It is a combination of the meeting agendas, discussion topics and behaviours manifested during this initial period that offers additional data within the framework of this investigation.

6.1.1 Themes Emerging from the Initial Exploration at MDC

The issues highlighted in the first year of my research at MDC assisted me in improving the mind map identified on page 18 and in compiling the management structured interview which became the model for further case studies. The substantive themes emerging from this early research phase are summarised in the sections which follow. The first is role identity in MDC, as shown in Table 6.1.
Table 6.1  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Example of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management Meeting</td>
<td>'I don’t have a job description' (MD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1999</td>
<td>'I bring a number of strengths to the company and have been given a number of expectations' (MD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I know you will support me to get this done' (MD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'If we don’t achieve this, I will lose my position' (MD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Meeting</td>
<td>'Your help has been invaluable in identifying priorities' (MD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If, as Obholzer and Roberts (1994) state, the formal role is shaped in accordance with the organizational culture, I considered that the absence of the Managing Director’s (MD) defined role reflected the culture of the organization. If the primary task of the organization is ill defined and the role of the leader is ill defined, I wondered what the impact of that would be on the members of the business. It also appeared indicative of the culture of the company that no-one as yet had questioned the role fully prior to its introduction, sparking my curiosity. The MD was indicating that there were conflicts between his given position, albeit implied by his title and expectations, and his own projections and expectations. Such conflict may have arisen as the result of ‘colliding forces’ operating within the individual (following Triest, 1999).

In June 2000, members of the management group engaged in an exploratory session of how they perceived the group interface. Before we started, each individual within the group was asked to write on removable notes the main quality of each of their colleagues. These notes were handed in and categorised, with the dominant feature of each individual being explored collectively as the person’s strength. Those strengths
are shown in Table 6.2. In addition, each member was asked to highlight what they wished to achieve from the event. These items offer useful associations with role identity of group members in the organization.

Table 6.2  Perceptions of Role Identity in MDC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Personal Goal</th>
<th>Group Defined Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
<td>Feel Part of Team</td>
<td>Probing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
<td>Better Communication</td>
<td>Participator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
<td>Build relationships</td>
<td>Team Player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
<td>How to work closer and not compete</td>
<td>Focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
<td>How to be much better</td>
<td>Light Hearted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Manager</td>
<td>Work Closer Together</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>Build on Progress</td>
<td>Ideas Generator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Manager</td>
<td>Greater Fraternity</td>
<td>Balanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Manager</td>
<td>More cohesive team</td>
<td>Organiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Manager</td>
<td>Work together and be creative</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The consistency of group interpretation of individual strengths, as projected within the group, highlighted the strength of collective experience. In the researcher’s case for example, I was considered to be an organiser within the group and my business role was often seen and interpreted as an organizational one both implicitly and explicitly. The role of organizer is interesting from a self-awareness standpoint, in so far as an organizer also implies power, at least as one would control venue, subject and invitees. Tajfel (1972, 1978) argues that there is a qualitative association between interpersonal and inter-group behaviour. A core tenet of this argument is that
individuals identify themselves with a particular social identity, which is then positively enhanced or distinctive in the group with which the identity is associated.

The interesting reflection here is that there seems to be a conjoining of role and identity. Thus I became aware of the inherent risks in these associations as to the conflict that could occur resulting from the group perceived role and the individual perception, if these develop in a perpendicular way (following Esquivel & Kleiner, 1997). Clearly there is also a risk in enacting the role of organizer for the group as the responsibility for the effectiveness of group experiences and outcomes is realised. Managing the distress of others and challenging assumptions could be considered to be an inherent part of the role of the action researcher (Reason, 1999). I became interested about the potential risks to the researcher in opening these lines of inquiry.

Such risks and other emotional considerations may be examined by exploring the social defence behaviours in MDC. Table 6.3 below reveals the early findings of these aspects.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Example of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management Meeting September 1999</td>
<td><em>In response to MDs lack of job description; ‘Lucky You’, ‘Does that mean we can do without you then’ [Dave]</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General statements (said quietly or during breaks);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘MD can’t cope without another Corporate Executive here, it’s laughable’ [Ivan]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘It’s Ok to agree in there but you and I know what we need to do to get results. All MD wants his to push his division forward, well....., he’s not doing that on my back’. [Linda]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I know, it’s ridiculous. I’m too busy to worry about his issues’ [John]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘It looks like [the researcher] is MD’s side kick’ [Dave]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback session Customer Services Department June 2000</th>
<th>‘This was a farce, just a white elephant’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘You only want us to answer so you look good’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘We were towing the party line’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Why are you now interested in what we have to say, you weren’t before’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Customer Services Representatives]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such social defences were encompassed in some cases by the use of irony, humour and sarcasm (following Putnam & Boys, 2006). Individuals were tending to veil their rejection of the change embodied by MD, whose role was an added layer of control in a previously flat organizational hierarchy. Such ridicule and subtle underpinning commentary was evidence of a defence against the potential threat that MD imposed upon those present in the room. This was further exemplified by the Customer Services team members’ comments in June 2000. MD had developed an unfeeling reputation and the comments centred on his personal ability to relate to others. This was an interesting and somewhat unexpected indication of a larger set of social
defences possibly centred on leader identity (Ligon, Hunter & Mumford, 2008; Roberts, 1999).

My notes of the Management Meeting in 1999 indicate that the dynamics of the team were dysfunctional in that there were side discussions and body language which indicated that there was an issue with the credibility of the MD. Side comments, giggles, raised eyebrows, whispering and nudging could be construed as indicators that the team was not operating well together and there was a degree of discontent in the room. These behaviours appeared to be evidence of a resistance to the MD role covertly achieved through irony, humour, parody and inattention (following Putnam & Boys, 2006).

Janis (1972) work on groupthink suggested that groups may highlight predispositions which are unique to a group context. These predispositions are believed to lead to deficiencies in the decision-making processes and it seemed that by maintaining a focus on MD and his position, the group was avoiding dealing with those matters that may have triggered the response. I considered that the group may be limiting itself by not examining their underpinning situation by focussing their attention on the role of MD and not to what was changing in their working context.

In terms of individual anxiety, the impact of these events may have caused instability and a weakness in association with the social connections various members had in the system of work (Boethius 1999; Clarke, Brown & Hailey, 2009). This impact is exemplified by MD speaking to me after the September 1999 meeting to say 'He was not convinced' and 'Fed Up by the childish behaviour in the room'. He feared, he
said, that others would ‘drag him down’. He regularly used the phrase ‘banging his head off a wall’ which epitomised his frustration with his direct reports and others in the business.

Further evidence of the difficulties in social associations, particularly at management group level, occurred in June 2000 at the Customer Services department feedback session. The comments reveal that management had ignored previous input from staff, leaving staff disillusioned (following Weinbach, 1984). This disillusionment became anger at the meeting which was fostered, in part, by the behaviour of the departmental manager, Mary. In the feedback session Mary indicated through body language and facial gestures that she was unimpressed by the MD. She laughed or rolled her eyes back when he spoke with sincerity; shaking her head at positive comments and stood behind him, in full view of her staff, but out of his field of vision.

I felt that there was more to this and somehow that she was deflecting her own opinions through her group because it was easier for her to be comforted or supported by others, than managing the changing expectations with which she was confronted. Behavioural defences against anxiety are acted out in body language or ways of disassociating with what is happening (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 2005). Mary was indicating her possible resistance to the organizational change that the employee feedback session was trying to achieve and distancing herself from what was happening. Such a mobilisation of unconscious processes may indicate underlying issues such as her own anxiety of her capability to address these issues or confront her own reactions to the situation, that were seen to require further exploration (following Bovey & Hede, 2001).
Table 6.4 Politics in MDC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Example of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management Meeting</td>
<td>'It affects the way the business is seen by Corporate' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Meeting</td>
<td>'I realise we're all affected by Paris' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2000</td>
<td>'Progress comes from the management team' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Much work remains to be done - your involvement and buy-in is essential' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'We need to work together' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD comments to researcher</td>
<td>'Nearly all the managers have a solid line reporting to someone else, what the hell does dotted line mean anyway'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I'm not sure why I am here'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The politics of the situation was increasing as power relations were modified, either through success, failure or association, as shown in Table 6.4. Indicated here is a reflection of Foucault’s (1977) thinking that power is not simply rooted in structural constraints (such as the agenda of the meeting and structure of the company) but also diffused through discourse and multiple layers of control. There was evidence here that individuals were shaping their own countervailing power outcomes that were unexpected and unpredictable (Miller & Wilson, 2006). The complexity of the situation was indicative of the sophisticated nature of the research and the struggle to develop a consciousness of what is going on in the midst of the action, as suggested by Torbert (1991).
Managers have the capacity to exert powerful controls through emotional dependence and the way they are identified in the organization, as shown in Table 6.5. Such aspects can of course result in disruption and open rebellion if not managed effectively (Fleming & Sewell, 2003; Gabriel, 1999). Leaders have the ability to project onto their employees their own aspirations and vulnerabilities. I considered that both these managers were failing to recognise the issues inherent with conflicting messages, potentially resulting in a mutual lack of trust and misconceptions about things (Boethius, 1999).

Mary afterwards indicated that she was aware of her body language at the meeting. Mary felt that her team only supported her view because it was true, it was her view that she was just 'being truthful'. Truthfulness it seems has a connection with body language and not with the spoken word, as Mary had not commented at the meeting. It was an interesting notion. Later she explained that she felt excluded, that she did not have the open relationship and confidence that I had with the MD. She felt powerless and therefore did not feel motivated towards the company's initiative, which she had
associated with her feelings towards the MD. Mary felt limited empowerment and so gave little empowerment to her team. This was almost a self-fulfilling prophecy because in so doing the MD felt that she was incapable of the task at hand.

At the end of our meeting, she became more reflective and felt that she was part of the problem, but also a key to the solution. It seemed that even though Mary was experiencing strong feelings, they were overlooked until she was able to release them when other strong feelings dominated, as in the feedback session (Heen, 2005). Mary had developed a set of maladaptive defences which deflected her need to deal with the issues that she and the business were facing.

This event indicates that leading an organisation through change involves constructively balancing human needs with organizational expectations. This means that individuals need to change themselves for organizational change to be successful (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Kets de Vries, 2007).

**Table 6.6  Power and Authority at MDC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Example of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management Meeting</td>
<td>'I know I can rely on you' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback session</td>
<td>'It's politically correct to do what my manager says'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Services Department June 2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'It's easier to do what she says for a quiet life'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Customer Services Representatives]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

155
Power is typically defined as the inferred potential of one person to cause another person to act in accordance with their wishes or to act upon the organizational structure (Obholzer, 1999; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2001). There is evidence in the above comments that managers were attempting to persuade others to follow their instruction or guidance. Early notions of 'political correctness' were presented in conjunction with the need for a 'quiet life', to bend to the will of the manager in order to avoid conflict. This may be indicative of a culture which does not encourage questioning of power or authority to act and would prove a useful notion for future inquiry.

The above early indicators were useful in developing my understanding from the literature review on the subject of anxiety and thus in preparation of the management structured interview.

6.2 Management Interviews

The first structured interview was piloted with three managers, including the MD who asked me to add a further two questions. I added them as 2(a) and 3(a). The subsequent structured interview, which is presented in Appendix 3, was asked of all Managers in a one-to-one interview with the author. Prior to the interviews I explained the purpose of the structured interview and the research itself. I clarified that my goal was twofold. Firstly, I wanted to understand their individual experience. Secondly, I wanted to gain their participation with my wider research in the subject for my doctoral studies. Each manager willingly participated and I guaranteed anonymity of results. I also stated that the results would be used as part of a further collective enquiry into what was happening in the management team. Each person
agreed and was informed that they could stop or withdraw at any time. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were audio tape recorded and followed the approach to the structured interviews detailed in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

Table 6.7  Structured interview Results at MDC – Notions of Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial Control</td>
<td>'Pretty much a lot. Yes, I think so... you know my boss, he’s fairly easy going, he leaves me to it – as long as I’m doing the right thing that’s fine.' [Linda]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Day to day activities, I would say probably 80% control;... it tends to be dictated to by meetings in particular,' [Tom]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Uhm, Uh, I think...I have got uh between 80 and 90% control of what’s happening here, I mean business wise. But then, uhm, on the MDC [Europe] side, its less..' [John]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I think I have quite a lot of control of what I do' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I have a great deal of control of what I do.' 'I feel I am very much in control as guided by my responsibilities and my manager' [Dave]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'...probably as much as I need to have really' [Mary]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'95%' [Ivan]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I think I have uhm quiet a high level of control, that would be my first initial answer. ... overall I have pretty much control of what I do' [Peter]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notions of control, as shown in Table 6.7 at MDC appear to be associated with the ability of managers to make decisions and have controlling influence on others. There is an indication, however, that there is a risk that internal control is reduced because of causal ambiguity, and through other hierarchical relationships (Sillince, 2006).
All felt that they had substantial control of what they do but there were a number of associations with degrees of control. This perplexity appeared to be associated with the autonomy that their more senior managers were willing or expected them to have. It was interpreted that this gave tacit permission for those individuals to control independently what they do. Control then, appears to evoke a multi-faceted and multi-layered phenomena permeating through the hierarchical structure by degrees of structured boundaries (Chattopadhyay, 1999).

Notions of control seem to have a number of built-in contradictions, because control is bounded by the permissions or expectations understood by managers. This concept may be best explored by examining the managers’ perceptions of notions of authority. If hierarchical systems are intrinsic to control, then it would indicate that notions of authority follow the same framework.
Table 6.8  Structured Interview Results at MDC – Notions of Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial Authority</td>
<td>'I think you are given the perception that yes there is a lot of decision making that is rolled down from the top, but it is not, there is always that controlling factor that's coming from the top....It's just a waste of decision making here...uhm, very questionable.' [Linda]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'With a matrix organization, different divisions decision making processes can sometimes be obscured and maybe we don't always have the time to fully make those decisions and that's understandable obviously when there's time and pressure that comes to bear.' [Tom]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Within my division, I would say that there is a lot of freedom in making your own decisions, having people make their own decisions, I think there are guidelines to which you have to keep but within those guidelines, you have a lot of freedom.' [John]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think it's getting better, uhm, I think it's not all the way there but it's certainly better.' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I think we are too diffuse that so many decisions have to be made at a reasonably appropriate level, because if you are talking shall we say of a higher level, the person in that higher level, probably doesn't have the knowledge of the circumstances and so is probably unable to know that the decision is even being made... I have a lot of responsibility to do things right of wrong, which is given to me by my manager.' [Dave]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Yeah, I think that people at all levels are reasonably empowered to do what they need to do.' '...some decisions can't be made by one person, we have to enrol a whole team of people because everyone reports across all these dotted line structures to various people so I guess it could be a bad thing in certain cases.' [Mary]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I think those people who need to make decision are taking them but I'm not sure if they are taking into account everybody's opinion, well, not everybody's opinion, but those people that should have some input'. [Ivan]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'No, I think too many decision are taken at the very top and then filtered down and then there's no discussion with people that matter.' [Peter]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the majority of respondents, notions of authority, as shown in Table 6.8 do appear to be perceived as part of the hierarchical structure of the business. It appears to reinforce Chattopadhyay’s (1999) view that people at the top consciously or unconsciously take steps to monopolise certain aspects of information that are considered important in the organization. Notions of authority are limited by notions of knowledge or boundaries of control, through guidelines, systems and processes (Hardy & Clegg, 2006). Legitimisation of control and authorisation to make certain decisions maintains a boundary of identity. It also dilutes accountability and may shield some people from inappropriate decisions made by others.

It appears that systems, processes and relationships with senior staff indicate their span of control and authority to act. For the majority of managers, there appears to be a collective consciousness that decision making responsibility is bounded by where they are in the hierarchy. Nevertheless, there also appears to be frustration that not enough consultation arises and that decisions are based on part understanding. However, as Braynion (2004) indicates, compliance is an important association of the usage of power. These responses indicate that at least some managers were struggling with these parameters.

Notions of power and notions of control appear to be paradoxical in nature. Managers feel they have power but generally limited authority to act. It is intriguing to consider that dichotomy existing in these belief systems which are fundamental to management practice. Managers felt that they largely had control but limited decision making responsibility. This understanding appeared to indicate that these notions were complex and multi-faceted. Power, control and authority to act were linked with
hierarchical systems but were not in balance. This insight is exemplified by one manager stating they had 90% control of what they did but limited decision making responsibility.

I pondered on whether these were distinct processes or whether one relied on the other. As Kets de Vries (2007) indicates, it would appear that managers create plausible associations which seek to justify the behaviours of others or the parameters in which they operate. Such associations may be seen as evidence of social defence behaviours which serve to reinforce individual identity and the suppression of unacceptable feelings. Recognising and overcoming these aspects would rely on the ability for management teams to work together to confront and interpret these associations. Notions of mutual support and trust are a useful indicator of the extent of group cohesiveness to enable such processes to exist.

**Table 6.9 Structured Interview Results at MDC – Notions of Mutual Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Support</td>
<td>'Up to a certain point...I think there may be people within...that are envious about the success I have had. Once a month is not enough to demonstrate the potential support we could give one another' [Linda]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I think there is always a conflict of interest naturally, we work in a business where different divisions are competing for resources so the political element comes into it, there's always a balance' [Tom]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'..I think its free for all. There's no real structure, I won't ask anyone else in my division...in the UK I ask a few people and I think there's a structure that I can ask, and uh, share experience and whatever.' [John]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I think so, yeah, I have learned a lot being in this fluid structure..' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I feel there is mutual affection and there is a sense of what we are doing' [Dave]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Yes and no, depends on the relationships with the managers.' [Peter]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'We have more of a collective spirit than we did 3 or 4 years ago' [Ivan]</td>
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</table>
The answers to the structured interview would indicate that there are differences in support that members of the group obtain from one another, as shown in Table 6.9. Group identity and cohesiveness is important in work groups as both of these help to confirm the role of the individual and their sense of self worth (Kets de Vries, 2004). The comments identified above indicate that there are difficulties for the group in its self identity and notions of mutuality. These aspects indicate that there may be some underlying anxieties which are being contained by the group’s failure to successfully address the sources of these tensions. There is evidence that managers are displacing their own failings in this regard by a focus on others’ failure to support their needs. These ideas may be further expanded by exploring the associations managers give to the subjects of hidden agendas and how the group deals with difficult issues.

**Table 6.10  Structured Interview Results at MDC – Notions of Hidden Agendas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Agendas</td>
<td>'There is always a hidden agenda, always' [Linda]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I think they are much more open than they were but I think there is still a large degree of political correctness in the way that they position themselves.'</td>
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<td></td>
<td>'I think there is always a different agenda, uhm, in many cases for the right reason. You could be completely transparent and overwhelm people with information which could then be misinterpreted and used in an inappropriate way.' [Tom]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Generally I think they are all very open, but sometimes I think there is a hidden agenda'. [John]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>'That's a difficult one, the classic criticism of matrix management us that it pushes down uncomfortable decision making from the centre or the top if you like, to middle management, management that aren't empowered to take it on.' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I don't know, I don't see it, but then I tend not to see those things' [Dave]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I think so, I don't think anyone deliberately conceals anything, sometimes people don't know what people want to know, so they don't put it out, I don't think its deliberate.' [Mary]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>'I would say in most cases yes.' [Peter]</td>
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</table>
The notions inherent in the above statements disclose an established set of boundaries existing in the system of work which appear to be reinforced by notions of hidden agendas. Such perceptions have the potential to guide the way the system evolves and the opportunity for individuals to identify themselves and others within that system (Hirschhorn, 1988; Hyde, 2006). If the majority, as in this case, consider that hidden agendas exist then that consideration appears to invoke a set of behaviours that may create barriers to progress in exploring causality of organizational issues and group interactions (Horlick-Jones et al, 2005). This presented an area for further examination which may be clarified by understanding how individuals felt the group dealt with difficult issues, as shown in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11  Structured Interview Results at MDC – Notions of Dealing with Difficult Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dealing With Difficult Issues</th>
<th>‘I don’t think so because I think that the interpretation is when you try to address issues they seem as maybe you are attacking somebody but you are not’ [Linda]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I think the more difficult and complex issues are, I think the more heads should be involved to make the right decision, it’s very easy to make a wrong or bad decision without consultation’. [Tom]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘I think there are difficult issues that are not spoken about that are kept under, but then I think that happens everywhere.’ [John]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘...like I said earlier I think people just fall back into the division, when we are moving into unchartered territory they don’t feel confident or comfortable, they fall back into it. I’d like them to be able to drop that baggage and say hey it doesn’t matter, we are all trying to move this thing forward as a group you know, and forget those alliances and allegiances... I think that if there are any hidden agendas, quote unquote, its because people are unclear about where their true allegiances lie...’ [MD]</td>
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<td>‘I don’t know what difficult issues we’ve had recently’ [Mary]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Yeah, I would say they were’ [Ivan]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Yes, I do’ [Peter]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These statements indicate that there appears to be a difference between what colleagues say and what they really mean. These aspects are justified by either disassociation through the use of the word ‘they’ instead of ‘I’, and a distancing from these aspects as a plausible outcome when structures and systems are not clear. It appears that some managers in the group are completely unaware of their own psychological drivers. Individuals appear to see little value in understanding what drives their behaviours or manifestations.

Such unawareness becomes part of their individual understanding and reinforces certain boundaries of rationality which enables them to defend themselves against the negative feelings these statements may arouse. Self protection stems from withdrawing from these associations for fear of criticism, fear of failing to serve the interest of the division or region, and fear of the risks associated with raising the issues. Managers defend these behaviours by an over reliance on the condition of the system of work, in that these social, divisional and hierarchical structures are responsible for these outcomes (following Jacques, 1974). In order to avoid any unpleasant associations and protect their own areas of control, managers appear to minimize voicing their concerns, suppressing these aspects within a justifiable work context. As Levinson (2002) highlights, these avoidance practices may result in oversimplification of issues in an effort to drive change through the business.

The associations lead us to consider whether trust and openness can exist in such a framework, as shown in Table 6.12. If managers are not able to deal with difficult issues as a group and there is a concept that hidden agendas permeate the practice of
management, it is interesting to explore how they forge relations and mutuality with others.

Table 6.12  *Structured interview Results at MDC – Notions of trust and openness between individuals.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust and Openness between others</td>
<td>'Trust to a certain degree, maybe to a certain degree at the same level, to a certain degree the next level above but there's very few people in the company I would personally trust. There's just too many hidden agendas to have that trust in people.' [Linda]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>'I think increasingly so, trust and openness is something that has to evolve and grow with a maturing organization. ...there are bound to be stresses and strains, different agendas that are involved.' [Ivan]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>'No I think that it all depends in the relationships you have with the people... I think a lot of people are just, you know, there's not openness or they don't trust you or you always think that they always have a hidden agenda, but that's not the case but that's how they are.' [John]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'We need to calibrate expectations, seek input and then be seen to be acting upon it. Also, need to be more consistent, the organization is slightly worried about status.. creating more untrustworthiness. Management by flavour of the month – fly by night.' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I'd say probably yes more than no although uhm, there is a substantial amount of them and us which you tend to get in a hierarchical organization so, uhm, I don't think we are by any means perfect in that regard' [Dave]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Well, there is in customer service, I tell them what is going on and I expect them to come and tell me' [Mary]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the structured interviews indicate that personal trust is not as a general concept an inherent part of the relations between MDC members. As Billow (2004) indicates, there appears to be a widespread contradiction between openness and truth
evasion. If openness is the platform on which to build trust, and as seen earlier, there is a predilection for hidden agendas, it is plausible that notions of trust are remote concepts for most participants.

Yet, the role of trust in business is seen to be important by researchers such as Rousseau et al. (1998) and Elangivan, Auer-Rizzi and Szabo (2007), who emphasise the importance of trust to hold relationships together and allow transactions to proceed. Trust is also an important facet of conflict resolution as it has the potential to allow individuals to engage in intellectual discussion as opposed to exchanges that may be emotionally charged (Cosner, 2009; Simons & Peterson, 2000). If, as it is indicated in the participants’ perceptions on the subject, trust is indeed a remote concept, the implications for the organization if the building of trust is left unheeded may result in the creation of additional anxiety and possibly organizational instability.

If such problems exist in association with others, then such a limitation may be an indication that there exists a culture which fosters blame, as shown in Table 6.13. Blame, may be associated with distrust and distancing from the consequences of discordant mutuality.
### Table 6.13 Structured Interview Results at MDC – Notions of blame culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blame Culture</td>
<td>'Yep I do... the easiest option is to back out and accept what a particular person said' [Linda]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Definitely not... I don't think anyone is shouted down whether it is popular or unpopular to do so. I would say no, I think its important to look for solutions' [Tom]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'No' [John, Ivan]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, I think there is still some hang over from that, I think people do want to avoid appearing to be at fault, I don't think we've quite got rid of that. Too often people will try to deflect their involvement in something..' [MD]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'No, I think we are more grown up than that' [Dave]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I don't think its blame, blame you know where people hold a grudge for a few weeks, it's just responsibility I guess, more than blame except that it doesn't feel like it sometimes. But I don't think blame, blame, people make mistakes, that's life' [Mary]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'No I don't feel that'. [Peter]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of this part of the structured interview were quite surprising. Whilst managers had a general sense of disconnect from their managerial colleagues, both emotionally and in some cases practically, through the structural system as shown in previous question responses, there does not generally appear to be a belief that there exists a blame culture. I considered whether the avoidance of blame was an indicator of a deeper issue of avoidance that may be underlying the system of work.

Accountabilities were clouded by a sense of discontinuity, distrust and disbelief. For blame to be apportioned, I felt that there needed to be a connectivity and understanding of shared purpose. If the shared understanding was missing, it was not
really a surprise that ownership of responses to organizational stimuli rested with the politics of divisional or departmental structures. Such structures allow poor decisions and consequences to be contained in the micro structures which are bounded by purpose, name or perceived separateness from the organizational whole. Blame in this sense could be projected onto the system of work itself, which then has the potential to become the cause of the participants' anxiety, and not the result of it.

If these aspects were considered to be part of the experience of work for MDC and accepted by the managers in the UK organization, I wondered whether the degree of acceptance could be understood by examining what things they could change about their role and the organization, if given a free hand. Answers to these questions may offer additional insight into the subconscious processes which may have been habitually suppressed by individual avoidance behaviours.
### Table 6.14  Structured interview Results at MDC – What managers would like to change about their job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Change Suggestions</td>
<td>‘I need to be stretched more – I feel that I have been in my comfort zone too long. Presentation – how I present myself in front of people then maybe… maybe that is what the issue is, I am not confident in front of people who count’. [Linda]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘My personal role I think probably managing conflict more decisively.. ’[Tom]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘There’s plenty of things I should improve, I think my personal skills to managing people should be improved. Also on certain business skills I should, I should improve. I’m not always having, you know, I wouldn’t say a clear picture, but sometimes I don’t know if I do the right thing or the wrong thing, or do I understand the right things or the wrong thing’ [John]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I think that this has been an ongoing sore really, it’s the clarity around the matrix you know, just exactly what am I accountable for? What I do like on the other hand is that nobody’s ever stopped me doing something, you know, the more I have acted empowered, the more people have accepted it.’ [MD]</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>‘I’ve got a geographical challenge, I would much rather be working with the group locally.’[Dave]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Communication with the team, it would be nicer to spend more time in the office and actually manage the actual team as opposed to managing the actual procedures and the functions of the team would be.. ’[Mary]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I am quite happy about how things are.’[John]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Job change suggestions, as shown in Table 6.14, indicate that managers feel they lack clarity of purpose or skills requirements to fulfil their jobs fully. Others wish to learn new skills or expand their responsibilities. The majority wished to engage in some form of learning and expressed an interest in developing new approaches to work activity. The job change suggestions did reinforce the concerns with organizational structure and frameworks.

Although there were indications from some that there needed to be an improvement in the ways they addressed organizational issues, there appeared to be still a
disassociation with their locus of control and the roles they embodied within the organization. The structural issues appeared to be a social defence against their own individual anxiety about their own roles and contribution. The interesting aspect here is that this was a shared perspective amongst most of the group members. The structure was containing the anxiety within it; it was both a condition and a response to the disassociations from the weaknesses of individual contribution and group relations (following Bion, 1961).

**Table 6.15  **Structured Interview Results at MDC –the two aspects that managers would change in the organization.

| Two aspects or organizational change | L1: The one thing at the moment I don’t like and again this is very divisional, is the way decisions have been made high up, that have an effect on my division that I think are totally wrong. I think there should be more contact with people at the very top, with people at the very bottom, without going through the VPs, I think that could be better. ...Life would be a lot easier if I could have a person that would make my life easier. I would possibly change the fairness of how that’s worked, it’s difficult to do but that’s what I would change.'[Linda]
| | L2: ‘Change the matrix – gain clarity about roles and responsibility and accountability. ...Managers are still torn, they don’t feel confident to support the country view as opposed to divisional view. There’s no clarity about who is my boss.’[MD]
| | L3: ‘I would change the structure we currently have, but when push comes to shove there is actually no-one responsible for the country. So I would change that, I would make all countries responsible and have a country structure, have a country sales structure and also have a country marketing structure.’[John]
| | L4: ‘I would say, less politics, its difficult in a big organization, a matrix organization with conflicting interests in certain areas. Minimise the politics, you can’t just say that, that has to evolve, I think the way that it evolves is to give processes and following the processes and procedures agreed upon by everybody. When those processes are scouted around and avoided, then that’s where the issues come up, when someone tries to drive an agenda without going through those processes, then the company is undermined, I think.’[Tom]
| | L5: ‘I would possibly change the fairness of how that’s worked, its difficult to do but that’s what I’d change.’[Peter]
| | L6: ‘I can’t even think of one, uh, I mean I don’t know I would be interested to see how people in the country actually report to the country manager, o make it a proper country manager thing so that you don’t have to jump through hoops of what Europe want and whatever on the product lines’ [Mary]
In terms of aspects they would change in the organization, as shown in table 6.15, it is not surprising that structural matters were identified. Changing the divisional orientated business to a country one, would, it seems, create solutions to their problems. In addition, processes such as promotion opportunities; notions of process and procedure control; addressing the structural affiliations with the United States of America, where the parent company resided; and role and purpose clarity were also considered. Very much in line with systems thinking approaches to work activities, these managers all identified that issues resonated in aspects of work outside of their control (Marshall, 2004).

There was a strong indication that lack of control allowed them to receive comfort from a shared belief that they were all victims of the organizational framework. In this way, anxiety was suppressed and all focussed attention on matters outside of the self. Stacey (2003:379) suggests that a 'good enough holding' of anxiety is appropriate in dealing with the fears that transpire from organizational change as it allows for free flowing conversation. In this case, conversation only existed around the issues that allowed them to diverge from the underlying associations, towards a common platform of resistance against structure, role and country associations.

One participant highlighted notions of fairness cross divisions and across genders. It seemed that this participant was feeling marginalised by the nature of their divisional association and gender. Whilst gender issues are not a specific area of research in these studies, this statement highlighted that in the global world in which we live, some women still feel disenfranchised with their roles in organizations today, as suggested by Olesen (2005).
In addition, feelings of marginalisation may also be a consequence of disenfranchisement with business processes which focus on organizational needs, rather than human needs (Bovey & Hede, 2001). If most employees expect to have their views considered and to be treated with respect (Hultman, 1995), then anxiety will result from those who feel this consideration and respect are not happening. The insights of Foucault (1977) play an important part in gender interpretations and provide an added impetus for work on gender and organizational blindness to such matters (Foucault, 1977; Hardy & Clegg, 2006; Mumby, 2001). This is an area for future research and outside the boundaries of the studies herein reported.

It was interesting that one participant recognised that ‘the more I have acted empowered, the more people have accepted it’. Control in this sense did arise from individual accountability. Here it is suggested that if one is prepared to take individual responsibility, the response to it could be supportive.

Risk taking, however, is bound to conjure additional anxieties as the fear of possible negative consequences is imagined. As an individual’s effectiveness may be based on their ability to distinguish between boundaries between them and their outside world, where these boundaries become blurred may result in additional anxiety (Bovey & Hede, 2001). Addressing these imagined boundaries of control may serve to diminish their impact on individual anxiety as assumptions become tested and countered.

There is evidence to show that inducing people to expect more of themselves prior to their actual experience leads to higher performance attainment (Tams, 2008). Inducing other to expect more of themselves tends to centre on the relationships
individuals have with their superiors. Notions of control and associations with those that are perceived to have control over others are interesting aspects to explore next.

Managers take their cues from others, particularly those to whom they report in the hierarchy. The need for human affiliation and belonging in humans serve as an emotional activity to confirm self worth or self esteem (Winnicott, 1975). We project our wishes onto others and try to anticipate how others will react to us. Leaders give their cues to others and others seek to deliver on those expectations (Kets de Vries, 2004). The structured interview elicited responses on two aspects of relationships with superiors. These were in the areas of opportunities for growth and development; and whether individuals were satisfied with the ways they were managed, as shown in Table 6.16.

**Table 6.16  Structured Interview Results at MDC –Notions of Management**

**Growth and Development Opportunities;**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth and Development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>'Presentation Skills, coming up to the same standard as my boss... [Linda]</td>
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<td>'If I wanted to grow and try to get promoted, then I would have to relocate so</td>
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<td>that's an inhibiting factor for my particular job' [Ivan]</td>
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<td>'... my personal skills to managing people should be improved. ... within that</td>
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<td>I mean I should be more, more direct and forceful.' [John]</td>
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<td>'.. clarity around the matrix, you know, just exactly what am I accountable</td>
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<td>for?[MD]'</td>
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<td>'I do feel that I have the opportunity, whether one takes all the opportunity is</td>
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<td></td>
<td>another matter,' [Peter]'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'there's a hell of a lot that I still need to develop and get into now to make</td>
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<td></td>
<td>changes' [Mary]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I don't see that I'd want to make too many changes' [Dave]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the responses to the structured interview, we can see that identity with their bosses is an important consideration when determining training needs. Aligning perceived expectations with their capabilities appeared to be about satisfying the needs of others rather than themselves. Role identity and self identity appear to be a consequence of the interplays between behaviours that are recognised by others and have consequence within the organization. So focussing on presentation skills, or conflict management skills, or communication skills, appears to serve the needs of their managers or others rather than a compelling need of self. Fleming (2003) identifies the distance that is created between inner self and the outer world by a process of reframing individual experience in the context of the mechanisms of control and disciplinary processes. Such mechanisms are wielded explicitly or implicitly by those who have leadership responsibilities for others.

Table 6.17  Structured Interview Results at MDC – Satisfaction with Manager

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction with Manager</th>
<th>'If you asked me a year and a half ago, I would have said No.. but that’s changed, it’s been very good'[Peter]</th>
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<td>‘I’ve had so many bosses it depends'[Ivan]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Yeah, I mean he doesn’t tend to manage a whole bunch..'[Mary]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'yes'[Dave]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I have two bosses, one is great, I think we have the same business vision... he is aware of the stresses and strains, he’s very open to ideas... The other is very supportive but there is no opportunity to discuss shared goals, vision or strategy. He never has time for me apparently... maybe he is confused about what is expected of him.'[MD]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Well, what I have is a very, very good boss, a very, very nice man, he listens well when you ring him and you know you can bounce things off him... The only thing that I miss is that he never rings for himself’ In the last seven months, he has very, very rarely spoken to me... I have never had the feeling that he is steering me.. In general I am satisfied with him but then the business goes well and that’s easy, but you know, there’s not the support you would expect.’[Linda]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I’m extremely satisfied, my current boss is excellent. The only criticism I would have is that he probably doesn’t have enough time to spend on everything.. ’[Tom]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘To a certain degree. It sounds stupid but more eye to eye contact and more sit down – set objectives that we can work through and some constructive management.’[Linda]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
With regards to satisfaction with their managers, as shown in table 6.17, there is an intriguing mixture of experience. In some cases there is a dichotomy of experience, interpretation and justification. Managers felt that they wanted to say everything was fine. Some would not be drawn on the question. Others wanted to give everything a positive spin, with some comments veiled by the myth of confused identities, position and structure. Individual perceptions of reality were blurred by distancing themselves from the difficulties that they encounter. Hardy and Philips (2004) report the difficulties for individuals understanding the social realities in which they operate. As communication with others is ingrained with inconsistencies and contradiction, these tensions can create new defences against the anxiety that is released. For some, these tensions meant giving plausibility to their situation by projecting their own confusion onto the behaviours of others.

If communication in businesses is flawed by a number of variables such as individual perception, culture, manager relationship, and identity of self and others, it would be useful to address some of these sources of tension in a joint way. Testing assumptions individually and collectively would require an intervention which permitted the questioning of assumptions and the willingness to address collectively the sources of anxiety in the individual and the group. This was in part the aim of the feedback session with participants regarding the results of the structured interview completion.

6.2.1 Feedback Session on Structured Interview Results

The feedback session was conducted as part of a management offsite meeting to review business performance. It was held in the afternoon session as a separate agenda item. The session took two hours. The themes emerging from the structured
interview results provided a useful platform for exploration. The themes were summarised as follows:-

a) Decision making power
b) Trust and openness
c) Dealing with Difficult Issues
d) Management By others
e) Mutual Support
f) Politics
g) Structure

Much discussion was generated in the feedback session, with managers focussing on two aspects of the results which triggered an emotional reaction from many in the group. These emotional reactions stemmed from an initial denial of the prevalence of responses in this context. I responded to such denials by emphasising that the themes represented a synopsis of what each individual had identified when completing their structured interview. If the participants wished to change it or define it in an alternative way, this was encouraged. Nevertheless, participants reflected and acknowledged that these were concerns for the group after all. Emotional responses then changed towards frustration, anger and disappointment as individuals admitted their feelings about how these aspects affected their relations with others. These two aspects were:

i. Underlying allegiances and perceptions inhibit group collectiveness

ii. Notions of authority are clouded
There were indications that the participants’ initial resistance to the feedback could be a consequence of the embedded social defences against anxiety. MD gave some examples of why this statement was true from his point of view and Linda and John ratified this by their own perception. This generated a good discussion about some of their difficult issues. Dave admitted he did not really connect with anyone in the group. Others thought he contributed little to the management meetings and he admitted it was because he got the impression no one seemed to care what he had to say. It seemed that he consciously disconnected himself from the group in order to avoid the negative associations that he felt from being a voice that was not heard.

This understanding seemed to unlock the group and others highlighted the difficulties they experienced with others in the room, particularly MD. This continued into an exploration of ‘Notions of authority’ which was another interesting aspect of group investigation. MD initially dominated the discussion and cited his ongoing frustration with his dual role. Interestingly, he focussed his comments on examples of role conflicts that had arisen recently and displayed sensitivity to the impact that this can have on other sales divisions. The impact this revelation had on the room was startling. There was agreement with the situation and Peter stated that he was glad that MD had recognised the difficulties caused. Others mentioned that they had ‘harboured frustration’ that he was overly biased towards his own division and felt he was envious of the success of others. In previous meetings this would have resulted in a heated discussion. However, for the first time Ivan stepped in to dissipate any potential conflict by emphasising that MD would only be successful because of the success of others. This was a moot point and all agreed that these perceptions were a consequence of the structure of the organization.
Much of the discussion did explore the problems with a matrix organization and the structural issues, but this was an inevitable consequence of releasing such pent up anxiety. I felt we needed to air these views so that we could move beyond the structural issues towards a realisation of self identity and group experiences. Exploring the messages from the structured interviews was a powerful session. All members of the group were actively participating and the discussions were openly explored and reflected upon during the meeting. Comments during the meeting highlighted the importance of the discussion to some of the group:

- 'I can’t believe x supported my position today, they have always criticised me behind my back’.
- 'I feel relieved that I’ve got this off my chest.’
- 'I feel more positive about the future’
- ‘We can create opportunities for more cross-divisional working’
- ‘I don’t know, yeah it feels good, but we simply haven’t got the control to fiddle with all this’

There were still areas requiring further investigation and collective enquiry but it was a start and at the end of the session, everyone agreed some principles for improvement. These are provided below:

1. An agreement to structure management meetings to include a lunch break and only focus on 1 or 2 strategic matters for full discussion
2. To be aware that we make decision on limited chunks of information, to actively seek feedback, value others input and consult.
3. To gain commitment from the Executive Country Sponsor to attend the majority of meetings
4. To gain clarity from above on how the business understands notions of authority and decision making power, to clarify the boundaries.

5. To seek coaching and feedback from Senior Management

6. To create opportunities for cross-divisional sharing

The group were collectively reviewing, exploring and reflecting upon individual experiences and delivering group outcomes. There was still a little cynicism regarding the effectiveness of being able to push upwards and gain clarity regarding some of the assumptions that were embedded in the group. However, there was a commitment to try and initial feedback post meeting from some of the Vice Presidents was that they found it refreshing to consider these notions.

My own manager, for example, acknowledged the difficulties encountered by the group were in part consequential of the structure but also part of an issue which required an organization-wide discussion about authority and control. He did acknowledge the difficulties, however, in pulling the Company executives 'out of their silos' and evolving a collective sense of purpose. This raised a concern in my mind that having started the journey towards sense-making of the management group practice, expectations may have been created that could not be realised. I felt that if relational boundaries could not be changed and clarity not obtained, would then the resultant uncertainty and ambiguity cause additional fear and anxiety.

What knowledge is considered to be important will depend on whether the organization values it as part of its identity (Alvesson, 2001). If MDC’s identity was centred on its divisional approach it is plausible that mangers would not obtain the
clarity that they are seeking. Politically, there was a possibility that additional crises could arise from attempting to exert influence without bringing it to fruition. Thus, whilst the containment of anxiety is problematic, it is also remains a comforting allusion for participants, faced with the alternatives of raising awareness and the potential risks associated therewith. As Greenwood and Hinings (2006) indicate, dramatic change may be beyond the capability of Senior Executives who will be constrained by their own cognitive processes.

However, managers have the potential to exploit their areas of activity in order to accomplish its integrative capability. O’Reilly and Tushman (2004:74) state that each set of structures has ‘its own processes, structures and cultures’ to exploit for the benefit of those within those structures. In this way, individuals have the potential to shape what they do between and below their remit of authority. Thus, the management teams of the UK MDC could help to shape their experience of work and address at least some of the causes of anxiety.

At the end of the session I suggested that each person considered the following questions:

- What can you personally do to enact your authority?
- How can you work through the perceived inhibitors?
- What can you do to leverage the group dimension?
- How can you work ‘beyond the matrix’ to achieve group collectiveness?
- What can you do to evolve any cosmetic sense of togetherness?
- If you consider the business as a social institution, what personal responsibility do you have to others?
What does this mean for you in terms of your notions of leadership, management and personal development?

The purpose of these questions was to move the group beyond the structural issues towards a more self reflective process of inquiry. By turning some questions on to the notions of self rather than other, individuals may be able to redefine their boundaries of control. This approach was synonymous with Foucault's (1980) idea that reflexive technique allows individuals to turn back upon, and take account of, themselves and others in a didactic way. Consistent with the encouragement towards a double loop learning approach (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985), the approach allows individuals to critique their own internal reasoning.

It would have been beneficial to continue the process of exploration combining individual reflexivity alignment with group processes. Unfortunately, I left the organization soon after this event and commenced work in the next case study organization.

6.2.2 First Case Study Review

The first case study revealed that the anxiety causation in managers stemmed from a number of situational and organizational factors. Early in the research, there were indications that although the management group met monthly and each meeting lasted 5-6 hours, there lacked a shared sense of purpose and belonging. Individuals were struggling with their role and authority, lacking clarity of role and function. There appeared to be little formal understanding of the nature of the group and a culture epitomised by its divisional structures.
Informally, there was a shared sense of each individual's purpose in the group largely stemming from the reflections of interpersonal behaviour on inter-group dynamics. There was evidence that anxiety was manifesting itself in social defence behaviour, with early signs of covert practice amongst group members. This was being perceived as a destabilising aspect of the group and inhibiting at least one member achieving his desired outcomes.

Such aspects also penetrated beyond the management group into the organization as reflected by the Customer Services meeting. Resistance was expressed openly and articulated by members as evidence of a lack of care or consideration on behalf of the management team. There was also evidence of divisive practices by management group members to distance themselves from negative associations about others, creating a safe harbour for their own anxieties to be contained. There was evidence of struggles with, and resistance to, power, resulting in conflicting messages to subordinates and a confusing projection of leader identity.

These early indications helped to create the structured interview which formed the basis for the research study in MDC. The results of the structured interview offered a rich source of material that enabled examination and exploration of the nature and impact of anxiety in senior management teams. Anxiety was both a cause of, and a contribution to, a number of situational factors existing in the MDC. What was revealed was a number of aspects of managerial life which were complicated and multi-faceted. Each had the potential to develop individual anxiety and its consequential social defence mechanisms.
Notions of control were encountered as a complex and multifaceted issue. Individuals encountered a good deal of control in what they did with the proviso that it met the expectations of their seniors. Notions of control were confused by notions of authority and there was evidence that managers were confused about boundaries of identity. Hierarchical considerations dominated the managers understanding, creating a boundary of rationality around control without authority. These were curious notions which permeated the group in a consistent way.

Group identity and cohesiveness appeared to be another cause of anxiety, with hidden agendas, a lack of mutuality, competitive pressures, and a concern for self, resulting in a complex interface of issues largely suppressed by individuals. Most did not raise these concerns, simply containing them by avoiding the issues or simplifying the problem. Most distanced themselves from these negative connotations by displacing their anxiety onto the structure of the organisation. Most gained comfort from the belief that such displacement was a consequence of the system of work, its structure, hierarchy and processes. Blame was not to be apportioned because everyone shared a group defence which resulted in failures of the system, rather than of self.

Change requirements centred on the need to change structure and process. There was seen to be little evidence of the need to address the human issues. Even though the managers themselves were evidently suppressing issues, they did not feel the need to evolve a sense of self understanding or group awareness. It seemed that the human side of business life was not as important as fixing other organizational issues. Whilst participants were managing to gain a hold over their inner anxieties, they continued to perpetuate an approach which allowed them to distance themselves from these
negative associations. The anxiety became both a container for, and a reinforcement of, the resistance to organizational frameworks that had spread throughout the group.

There was some evidence of limited exploration beyond the imagined boundaries of control. This limited success could be a source of additional anxiety through the creation of an ongoing blurring of boundaries as managers struggle to engage with their experience and that of others. There was evidence that managers had the ability to examine these notions in the management review meeting and whilst there was some relief of unburdening some of their inner anxieties, there still remained scepticism about future possibilities and constraints.

6.2.3 Two Years Later – Progress Update

In 2004, I met with MD for lunch and an update on how things had progressed since the two years of my departure. He explained that he had been ‘pushed out’ of the Company and a new hire had replaced him before he had left. About six months after I had left, he felt that ‘managers had returned to their silos’. I asked him what he meant. He clarified that the management group continued to speak openly about their issues for the first few months and then gradually had gone back to their own divisions, reporting things up through the divisional hierarchy and thus leaving him feeling isolated. He said that in their ‘silos’ they ‘shot missiles out occasionally’ but that they had never really got back the group togetherness they had achieved whilst I was there. He felt it was something to do with my leaving, that I had created ‘the glue that kept them stuck together’.

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In addition, the Company went through enormous changes. There was another acquisition of a competitor company, the share price was affected, there was restructuring and it seemed new crises were impacting upon the management group. He felt that they went back to what they felt was comfortable when these changes were arising, "back to their silos", he said, and back to his personal frustrations about lack of support and control.

This regression highlighted difficulties of sustainability I had not foreseen after the progress I felt we had made. My departure had left some momentum behind it but an additional period of change and stress, it may be argued, had triggered a response back to what was seen to be safe. The social defences against the anxiety that change caused appeared to have returned. It may be considered that interventions of collective inquiry have a limited life cycle. These intervention outcomes appear to extend until the next period of change. Without a catalyst to maintain collective inquiry, it was easier to revert to previous patterns of behaviour. I felt that as I had left prior to evolving a group of experienced reflective practitioners, I had left the intervention incomplete. Without reflexivity, the potential for ongoing understanding of ‘self’ and ‘others’ was going to be limited to situational factors and learned responses.

6.3 Case Study Two: The Software Company (TSC)

When I started with the Company I sensed that it was struggling with its identity as the Company name had recently changed and it had merged together a number of companies into one. The Cambridge Management Team (CMT) governed the European entities, including Cambridge, Germany and France. My first meeting was a few days after I started. There was no one with overall authority and the group of six
heads of department ran the meeting. I was encouraged by the openness of the meeting but the business performance was very poor, being 22% under plan when organic growth was predicted to be 20%. This was felt by CMT members to be a consequence of a lack of knowledge capability and confusion over company identity.

I was intrigued by the notion that knowledge capability and confusion over company identity was potentially a factor affecting the emotional condition of managers and others. Whilst this was not an aspect of exploration within the literature review, I considered that additional reading in this area might assist my understanding of these phenomena. TSC could be categorised as a knowledge-intensive company (Alvesson, 2001; Robertson & Swan, 1998). 60% of its employees were PhD qualified and its products therefore were the manifestation of knowledge application and quality. If TSC was struggling with its knowledge capability and its business performance was suffering as a consequence, it was plausible that the lack of identity as a knowledge-intensive company could be seen to affect the ability of employees to be able to define themselves (Alvesson & Willmott, 2000). Following Foucault (1980), individuals may have a confused self-definition and anxiety may result.

In addition, hierarchical differences in perceptions of TSC identity may offer further explanations of this confusion. Organization identity can be defined as that which represents the organizational members' perceptions and beliefs about what differentiates them from other companies and how that identity is then presented externally (Corley, 2004; Cheney & Christensen, 2001). As organization identity is socially constructed it has the potential to be shaped and changed over time as a result of the influence of others either internal or external to the business (Cheney &
Christensen, 2001; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Ybema, et al, 2009). It follows, therefore, that if this aspect is socially constructed than different levels in the organization hierarchy may have different perceptions about what is central and distinctive to TSC. Thus, different perceptions have the potential to increase anxiety through conflicts arising due to the different beliefs about the organization status and future needs (Brown & Humphreys, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2002). These aspects were considered to be interesting notions to explore as part of the case study.

The complexity of organizational identity was complicated by the recent acquisition activity of TSC. Many of the staff had not relocated to Cambridge from the acquired companies and there were a number of open positions to be filled; 8 in the UK and over 40 in the USA. Market growth was not as fast as had been predicted and certain product offerings were not being taken up. The perception of the CMT was that morale in the company was poor and motivation low. Business planning was still in progress for 2003 but it appeared that this was a fairly remote activity, completed in the USA for world-wide implementation. The CMT was struggling with its own management and leadership identity and what should be the company culture. The struggle was acknowledged in a corporate presentation the following week by the Chief Executive Officer.

The CMT in October had a number of items on the agenda for discussion. They included: developing a positive culture and a cohesive unit; work to enhance people’s understanding of what other departments do; the general business plan; and adding value to the workplace by introducing group activities and social events. All members of the CMT had come from the integrated companies. All had long service with those
companies and none had management experience outside of their companies. I took the opportunity to ask for their help in understanding their experiences as part of my doctoral studies. Most managers were PhD qualified and enjoyed the notion of participating as well as evolving a shared sense of understanding.

6.3.1 First TSC Management Structured interview November 2002

I sent out the management structured interview I had designed at the MDC, asking two of the CMT members to recommend improvements to it to suit the culture of the company. The modified structured interview is attached at Appendix 4.

The structured interviews were distributed to the six members of the management team and only three responded. The structured interviews were coded and themed as they represented 50% of the group’s view and therefore I felt this was useful material. I followed up with the others who decided that they did not want to answer the structured interviews or allow me to interview them because they feared a likelihood of being seen to be ‘found out’. They felt that the questions exposed them in seeming to criticise the company and they were anxious that this would impact them in some way. This was an interesting aspect of the work environment as managers were reluctant to articulate their perceptions in a way which may be perceived to undermine the agency and structure of the overall business (Ybema, *et al*, 2009).

The non-respondents acknowledged that the questions ‘made them think’ about their situation and they realised that things were not as they had perceived. I asked two of them what they meant. They stated that even though they were not prepared to have their views on record, the structured interview started a process of review in their
minds. This was an unexpected impact of the structured interview. It stimulated a conscious and in some ways individually independent journey of discovery despite self-exclusion from any participative process.

Despite the confidentiality commitment, I realised that it was probably too early in my time with the Company to build a relationship which gave them belief in my assurance of confidentiality. One CMT member stated that my boss ‘was indiscreet’ and they were afraid that I could also be like her. It was revealing that they transferred her behaviour onto me. This was evidence that managers’ expectations were coloured by their experience of the function historically. Ideas of transference and associations with others were interesting notions which indicated that individuals were capable of mismatching the reality of their work situation with that of subconscious scenarios (Kets De Vries, 2004).

Despite only receiving 3 structured interviews, the following statements were indicative of the managers’ experiences. As 3 structured interviews represented half the members of the CMT, I felt it was useful to examine the notions represented by this group. These are presented below in Table 6.18.
Table 6.18  Initial Structured Interview Results – TSC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial Control</td>
<td>'I have a reasonable amount of control of what I do’ [Charles]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I don't really control strategy but I do have control of my work' [Steve]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'All interesting work is handled by my VP, and even many mundane tasks have at least to be decided for me, not by me’ [Greg]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with Difficult</td>
<td>'No-one addresses difficult issues, the standard response to a serious issue seems to be to lock the doors and hope no-one notices whilst things get sorted’ [Steve]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and Openness</td>
<td>'A great deal of this is down to obsessive nature in respect of keeping everything 'top secret' even when totally unnecessary' [Steve]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Yes'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing With Conflict</td>
<td>'There's no particular need for conflict since we do not generally interact enough to put conflict on the menu..... we don't have it, we don't avoid it’ [Steve]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst these responses were limited to half of the management team, the early indicators suggested that managers had little control of their work situation. They seemed to be limited to task management and with even 'mundane tasks being decided' for some. Difficult issues were largely unaddressed and there was a secrecy regarding work activities. Conflict was not seen to be an issue because the business had adopted a practice of avoidance; therefore issues of conflict did not materialise.

These early indicators revealed some disconcerting assumptions about the role of regional management. It appears that management did not perceive themselves as...
representative of the controlling interests of the business in this company. Management, at least at country level, serve to deliver upon the instructions received from their superiors. They did not enact authority or make decisions relevant to the use of resources. The gap between normative associations with the role of manager and its effective realization in this company implied an organization without control. Yet the pervasiveness of the power and authority of remote management countered this view. Local management appeared to deflect their interests onto others, to deflect authority and self discipline. Legitimate power was circumscribed because the managers allowed their own power to be eroded by an over reliance on their superiors (following Hardy & Clegg, 2006).

Hierarchical power is often assumed to rest with the management that represents the entities top management teams (Maclagan, 2007). In this case, total dominion is given to others and managers adopt an obedience which suppresses their anxieties. This was evidence of a resource-dependency where local management wielded a degree of authority by their influence on important people resources (Pettigrew, 1973). Political connotations were engendered through the ability to manage these resources as managers had the potential to utilise their subordinates’ dependency to gain credibility beneath them in the hierarchy.

Prior to introducing a second structured interview which may offer additional insights and opportunities for understanding, a new Chief Executive Officer had joined the business in the USA and had immediately introduced sweeping and transforming changes. Headcount was to be cut in a phased approach resulting in monthly announcements about redundancies. The Consultancy Division was to be closed in its
entirety with the loss of 10% of the workforce. The Consultancy Division had been
seen as a unique offering to customers which created differentiation in the
marketplace. Its loss had the potential to destabilise the business and everyone was
feeling vulnerable. I attended a Sales and Services meeting that month to hear the
Director from the US, informing the group 'I am here to protect you from the crap that
flies around this Company'. It was interesting that he was articulating a distance
between himself from the activities of a business which he assisted in leading, and I
considered whether this reflected his own anxieties about the change that was arising.

During the conference he questioned the viability of strategic decisions, mentioning
that nanotechnology was a huge growth area for the business with great market
potential but resources were being removed. The Director won many allies at the
meeting and his team rallied around his vision. His strategy was an interesting one
and struck me as 'a call to arms'. Such associations revealed that the business seemed
to have distinct associations with 'fight or flight' responses to change (Kets de Vries,
2004). The Director was creating empathy with what he perceived to be others’
experiences and transferring his own anxieties onto the perception of others. Leader
identity is an important feature of business life and in this way he was provoking a
response in others containing these anxieties in the practice of others (Ligon, Hunter
& Mumford, 2008).

When anxiety dominates, there are often shared assumptions about the role of leader
(Roberts, 1999). Bion (1961) identified a number of 'basic assumptions' inherent in
the role of leader. They include: dependency, where group members look to their
leader to protect them; fight/flight, where they look to the leader to identify an outside
enemy and to lead them into battle or escape; and pairing, where people look to their leader to produce salvation. The Director had achieved these aspects and provided protection from anxiety, mobilising them for work.

6.3.2 Second TSC Management Structured interview April 2003

I felt confident that I had now gained enough trust with the CMT to re-issue the management structured interview. I sent out nine structured interviews, as the CMT had expanded in the period, with eight returned. One participant still felt unsafe to complete hers and I accepted that she did not wish to participate. The returned structured interviews gave more than minimal answers to each of the questions and were a rich source of data for the research. Extracts from the structured interviews have been provided in table 6.19 below to indicate the strength of association with comments received.

Table 6.19 2nd TSC Structured Interview – Notions of Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notions of Control</td>
<td>'I have a good amount of control... The area over which control is much less certain is long-term development and strategy for my team' [Tim]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Line Management: 95%, Business: 20%, Support from management: 20%' [Charles]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I believe we have control of tactics and execution, but not necessary on objectives' [David]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I don't feel over constrained in many ways at all' [Graham]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I feel that I have control over the day to day functioning of my team' [Jess]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I do not have control over what I do, the control comes from how I do it' [Matt]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'In the past few months very little!' [Greg]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notions of control, as shown in Table 6.19, are largely accepted by the group as an inherent part of business operations. The boundaries of management are limited to tactics and operational management. The respondents felt that strategic direction and business evolution were someone else's responsibility. This was an interesting perspective, as there had been evidence of increased energy and challenging of the status quo in recent months. The mood was changing and I was curious to understand the comments further.

What is interesting here is that the above examples show the extent to which knowledge and power are interwoven. Knowledge of the future of the business direction resides with the parent company in the USA. Such knowledge enables those in control to wield power as the managers feel constrained to ask management about what is known at this point in time. Thus, resistance is constrained by a lack of understanding, which as Hardy and Clegg (2006) identify, exerts powerful normative controls through dependence and organizational identification. Managers, in this case, were accepting that the dependence was part of business life. This aspect was extended into the amount of influence each manager felt they had in the business, as exemplified in Table 6.20.
Table 6.20 2nd TSC Structured Interview – Making a Difference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making a Difference</td>
<td>‘I must make a difference or I am simply an overhead which should be dispensed with (to put it brutally) ‘[Matt]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Of late, I had felt that my actions had little impact anywhere.. ’ [Jess]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Yes’ [Tim][Bill][Graham]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Europe: Yes; US: No, Globally: Some’ [David]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘My responsibility and action for delivering quality products on time will make a difference to our business globally.’ [Charles]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Globally, yes’ [Greg]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a general feeling that the managers were able to influence their areas of responsibility but not always across boundaries of country or region. There was a belief that if they were not able to influence and make a difference, they would be dispensed with (see first comment above). Consequently power relationships were seen as a constraining factor in addressing the issue further (following Hardy & Phillips, 2004). So for this individual, there was safety in managing and influencing within the boundaries of his role, imagined or otherwise.

Others were reluctant to expand on their answers. I sensed that most were struggling with their ongoing purpose in the Company and were finding it difficult to address the question. Anxieties were suppressed in this way as it was easier to ignore the inner conundrum and hope it would go away. It was a concern that the question itself may have brought to consciousness deep set fears about their ability to transact their role in
terms of the value it brought to the business. Although individual situations are normally not the result of a single discourse, it was interesting that most members of the group appeared to feel this way, as reflected not only in their responses but also in their difficulty in seeking clarity of role purpose (which was a topic of discussion at the management meetings). It highlighted the gaps and tensions prevalent to their own experience. The structure of power associations evident here served to maintain and realize the direction and regulation of business practice as suggested by O’Doherty and Willmott (2001).

So, if managers feel they are tactical and make a difference within a boundary of management roles, one would assume that their notions of power would equally be constrained by the boundaries of role and knowledge in the decision making process. Responses to the question about decision making power (question 6) are shown in Table 6.21.
### Table 6.21 2nd TSC Structured Interview – Decision Making power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making Power</td>
<td>'In general, no, but I don't have huge issues as it relates to me personally' [Tim]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Decision making is mostly in [USA]!' [Charles]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Decision making power is not at all widely spread. Every decision I referred up was done with background briefing and recommendation – none was ever taken up' [Jess]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'There appears to be two classes of management at TSC, and breaking into the 'elite' class is not easy' [Bill]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>'No! Proper corporate wide decisions are being taken by one man – the rest is largely implementation – I don't think that is a bad thing especially if he gets it right' [Matt]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'No. The power is focused in the exec management team, which is fine, but seems to be jealously guarded by the individual on the team.' [Greg]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'No' [David][Graham]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As Hendry (2000) indicates, there is a view that strategic decision making is grounded in notions of rationality. This view represents a foundation of organizational thinking that managers operate within a ‘bounded rationality’ of activity (Reed, 2007) and with little regard to the human frailties that influence such outcomes. There is of course another school of thought that indicates that tacit knowledge is more prevalent in management decision making as this implies that there will always be a degree of vagueness in decision making processes (Polanyi, 1962). However, what is apparent here is that the majority appear to accept that decision making power sits outside their boundary of control. Power is always present in organizational life (Foucault, 1977;
Miller & Wilson, 2006) and standardises access to the decision making processes. In this case, it was largely accepted that decision making power and the withholding of information was a normal business process.

However, individuals continued to suppress their own feelings as a condition of these situations. It is suggested that decision making is accepted as someone else’s responsibility but the consequences on self identity break though the language used in response to this question. Self esteem is impacted by the individual who states that others jealously guard their ability to make decisions. It may be postulated that participants’ emotions were being projected onto others as a defence mechanism. Motives and associations for limited decision making put the blame on others for poor decisions, neglecting their own impulses to make decisions for themselves (following Bovey & Hede, 2001). Associations with others in supporting or avoiding decisions may be linked to the level of individual social influence that participants can exert.

Social influence can also effect self-efficacy beliefs and at least in one case, the participant identifies that they tried to enact some decision making, only to have it ignored by others. Such experiences may impact on the position of self towards a negative feeling of competence and comparisons with others (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Tams, 2008). Such mechanisms serve to increase individual anxiety and perpetuate the social defences adopted to protect against negative associations. Human performance at TSC is curtailed by a management centred approach which distances itself from an understanding of the importance of social dynamics.
If social dynamics are largely ignored at TSC, it is anticipated that notions of hidden agendas and distrust would be apparent. There are a number of questions linking to these notions, and the answers to these questions indicate that despite an acceptance that decision making is made rationally, there is some acknowledgement of tacit knowledge interference.

Table 6.22 2nd TSC Structured Interview – Notions of Hidden Agendas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Agendas</td>
<td>'As with any organisation, everyone has their agendas, some people are open, others aren't' [Tim]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'In Cambridge I don't see there are any hidden agendas. I feel I can trust my peers.' [Charles]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Although agendas sometimes are not exactly hidden just rather not open, there is no open discussion of possibilities to ensure that the best route forward is actually taken' [Jess]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Hidden agendas seem very much to go alongside an apparent lack of trust, respect and honesty' [Bill]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'My feeling is that people in [USA] are supported better than people in Cambridge' [David]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Some managers are open, but I don't think this is the case for all' [Graham]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I believe the Company is overly politicised' [Greg]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'It seems to be the case, although I have been on the end of a couple of notes cc'd to a large audience – no one seems to use the phone!' [Matt]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in table 6.22, there appeared to be a degree of acceptance that hidden agendas were a fact of organizational life and that there was an expectation that issues would not be aired openly. If CMT managers could not trust each others’ motivations
and objectives, it was plausible that there may also be seen to exist a concern that others would not support those critical task dependencies that outline organizational life (Cosner, 2009; Gargiulo & Benassi, 1999). Such interdependencies were veiled by a sense of localised collegial unity but many comments inferred a lack of trust inherent in the system of work. Collective action could therefore be limited by these notions as the anxiety of mistrust may directly impact the ability of the organization to respond to its requirements (Putnam, 1993).

There appeared to be a divide between openness of communication at a local level of experience and that of the headquarters in California. Difficulties of location have been increasingly prevalent with efforts towards globalisation that impact the emergence of communities of practice (McGrath, 2006). Distance inevitably means that a huge effort is required to ensure communication, structures and processes are consistently applied. The natural ties of location and common space delimit the extent of geographical association. In real terms, you are either within or outside those boundaries. Impermeable boundaries have the potential to exclude unwanted elements (Ashforth et al, 2000; Kreiner et al, 2006) and thus preserve aspects of identity. Thus the management team was the Cambridge Management Team, as opposed to TSC management team, preserving its identity as a separate space from its US parent (following Schatzki, 2005). In this way, dealing with the anxiety that managing across boundaries invokes was avoided.

It was interesting to note that a community of good practice had evolved in the CMT. Whilst there was acceptance of the status quo in terms of decision making, there was an inherent lack of trust in those decisions. Without trust, we become suspicious of
others’ intentions and motives (Fineman, 2003). In addition, for some CMT members, geographical expansion meant that certain important signals or cues in developing trust may be missed through an over-reliance on computer based communication.

Within the literature on interpersonal trust, there are strong indicators that interpersonal trust generates certain behaviours of cooperation, information sharing and positive outcomes (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Ferrin, Bligh & Cole, 2007). A lack of trust, therefore, infers that these co-operative opportunities are negatively affected. Notions of trust infer that the ability of the CMT to address its difficult issues openly may therefore be impacted. Table 6.23 identifies the participant views of conflict management.

**Table 6.23  2nd TSC Structured Interview – Notions of Conflict Management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict management</td>
<td>'I think we in Cambridge are challenging conflict' [David]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I think mutual support is sporadic..' [Jess]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'There certainly have been cases in the team in the past where no action was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>taken to resolve conflict complicated by a personality clash' [Jess]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I'm not entirely sure' [Greg]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'No' [Matt] [Graham]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I think we look for it everywhere, but at times do not have the skill set aligned to tread a careful path around it.' [Bill]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ability to resolve conflict was largely accepted as a consequence of the organizational condition. Again, there was disconnection between the regional office in Cambridge and the larger organization. In any event, CMT members either avoided
dealing with the question or gave only minimal responses. Disconnection appeared to
give resonance to the social defensive behaviour which avoids them having to deal
with difficult issues and was underpinned by an acceptance of corporate dictate. These
behaviours may be an indicator of an inherent anxiety that results from being held
accountable but which allowed them to protect the boundaries of imagined control
(Simpson, 2001).

Social defence behaviour was not only apparent in the management group but
throughout the organization. There was evidence of resistance to the company
activities. Resistance nowadays takes many forms and is usually not overtly
understood (Chreim, 2006). Humour, irony and cynicism may be indicators of
resistant behaviour which is largely unobserved by superiors in the business but which
nonetheless has the potential to disrupt organizational power relationships (Fleming &
Sewell, 2003).

Indications of such aspects, following Fleming and Sewell (2003), are prevalent in the
internal employee newsletter called ‘The Bunion’ (see Appendix 7). The authors put a
somewhat cynical spin on the happenings within the company. The December 2003
dition was ready for publication and due to fears from the three people who had
written it about being ‘found out’ by the new CEO, they approached him for
permission to print and distribute it. His reaction was one of distaste and displeasure.
He commented that he appreciated ‘British Humour’ greatly but considered that in
light of “what is in front of us and the possibility of a misunderstanding, it is
inappropriate. Further, I would not want to see company time, resources or
technology used to create, store or transmit this type of document in the future”. This was communicated to the staff involved and it created a lot of unrest in the company.

'The Bunion' was pushed underground and was released secretly in December to all UK staff, following a lot of outspoken cynicism and resentment from the employees. Such control was seen as an attempt to curb the emotional needs of the staff. 'The Bunion' was seen to be a humorous release to the frustrations pent up and contained within the business. Some of the anxieties within the organization were embedded within the humour contained in the newsletter and projected outward to business leaders. Humour and satire is indicative of resistance to change (Fineman, 2003).

6.3.3 Role of CMT

In November 2003, the CMT put together a joint discussion document to the US for consideration, entitled 'Discussion Document: Role of CMT', from which extracts are provided in Appendix 7. The document included CMT beliefs that there was a need for the CMT but its focus should revert to a provision of local knowledge, local discussion forum, developing local policy and 'housekeeping' issues. It was a self limiting document, affirming the lack of decision making authority in strategic matters and acknowledging control of the parent company. In this way the managers were reinforcing their home grown beliefs in their role as passive agents for the USA company. It was interesting that although the document was sent, it never received a response. Managers decided not to follow it up, agreeing that it was best not to 'rock the boat'. Again, this passivity was evidence of a general practice of containing their anxieties and evolving a set of social defences which was shared collectively and gave comfort to their condition (following Diamond, Allcorn & Stein, 2004).
These aforementioned events reveal a number of causes of anxiety in the business. The psychological investment of members of the business appears to have been damaged in some way by these experiences. Miller (1999) identifies that downsizing and technology advances, particularly in Information Technology (IT), means that attention needs to be paid to the issues of psychological effect. Failure to tackle the causes of employee psychological withdrawal may, he says, have consequences for the organization in resistance to change. In terms of psychological safety, in the sense that this allows oneself to employ the self without fear or negative consequences (Kahn, 1990), management may be seen to be feeling compromised. They not only found it difficult to tackle the psychological framework of the business, but also they were also somewhat paralysed by their own fears for self. Sources of anxiety became externalised and resisted through social defence mechanisms which allowed them to avoid these associations.

6.3.4 Second Case Study Review

At the beginning of this study, there was a general recognition by managers that things needed to change. The management team were inexperienced but keen to develop a shared perspective and new approaches to the business situation. Such enthusiasm was an encouraging start but was limited by the social defences that managers and their subordinate groups had adopted in response to change. The initial structured interview had introduced new aberrations of response to their anxieties and many were fearful of the perceived consequences of participation. Despite confidentiality reassurances they had transferred these fears onto me, creating an association with my manager who they believed to be ‘indiscrete’. It was an interesting conundrum and unforeseen in the research design. I decided to wait until
my own self-identity was established within the group and hoped for a change of interpretation. Responses to the first structured interview were useful indicators of the underlying managerial condition.

The first structured interview highlighted some interesting notions and provided early evidence that the practice of management in this company was disconnected from decision making processes towards a passive undertaking of others' authority. Despite managers individual feelings of anxiety, those anxieties were suppressed to allow them to deliver on tactical management approaches. A lack of authority was evidenced; so too a disassociation with decisions made by others.

The new Chief Executive Officer and the Director of Sales and Service reinforced those notions by implementing change, with the latter reinforcing a call to arms in his staff. He positioned himself as protector, aligning himself with staff’s fears, and operationalizing their anxieties by delivering a ‘hero’. These were interesting notions, expanding beyond the management group towards the UK company as a whole. Social defences as a shared seemingly conditioned response to change within the business were prevalent.

The second management structured interview reinforced these early notions, emphasising the associations between knowledge and power. Powerful normative controls were adopted by local management as they feared the implication of resistance. Resistance became centred on passive resistance, dealing with their associated loss of self esteem or self identity by drawing on the ability to avoid loss. Responsibility for self and others seemed to be veiled in a belief system which
adopted the authority of others, neglecting self but creating distance between each member of the management team. The voice of ‘other’ became an excuse not to find alternative approaches. The voice of ‘other’ permeated the organisation as a consequence of a powerful hierarchy where resistance was futile. Anxiety became contained by a rationalisation that there was not much managers could do about things.

Geographical expansion impacted upon the ability of UK managers to make sense of their condition. A prevalence of e-mail correspondence avoided the necessity for exchange at a human level. Developing trust was difficult and tended to be concentrated at subordinate level. Thus, anxiety became integrated into organizational rituals that presented the company condition as a consequence of USA decision making power.

Managers appeared to lack accountability for their actions. Their practices of rationality gave them a sense of isolation. The upward delegation of decision making power created disillusionment and frustration. They were not prepared to address these issues and release the individual and collective experience for fear of reprisal. Reprisal in terms of self esteem as the recognition of what was lost was developed, and the frustration of the potential opening of boundaries of practice, and the fear this evoked, was felt. Anxiety developed into a display of protective layers of avoidance which reinforced their helplessness to deal with their issues.

Psychologically, the employees in the business were disenfranchised from what was happening. They were withdrawing their goodwill and were displaying evidence of
withdrawal and avoidance. Managers continued to contain their anxiety and forge relations with other like-minded individuals in the pursuit of additional social defences to protect themselves against any negative feelings.

6.4 Case Study Three: PSEC.

I started in the Company in May 2004; one year after Paul had started. He had control over two businesses, one in the UK and one in Switzerland. As soon as I started with the Company, I became the recipient of a lot of issues that had been held onto almost 'in limbo' waiting for me to start (my predecessor had officially left in March 2004, although had been on a leave of absence since January 2004). This inertia is not untypical of organizations in transition (Espedal, 2006) and may be seen as indicative of a management loss of ownership of the issues residing within their own departments. In order to avoid dealing with the difficult issues, it appeared that they were simply frozen in time until I started.

Such inertia appeared to suggest the existence of social defence behaviours where individual anxiety of dealing with difficult issues was masked by an over-reliance on the distance between the departmental sub-systems and structural boundaries (Boethius, 1999). The issues were simply being ignored. Nevertheless, I was concerned that such avoidance may have the impact of creating unconscious resistance to the relationships within the structure. It may also indicate a dependency on others and reluctance by some managers to shape their own experiences (Erlich-Ginor & Erlich, 1999).
The World-Wide President (WWP) of our group attended the UK facility in June. I was invited to meet him as the new hire and looked forward to the opportunity. As I walked into the room, he stated ‘Head of HR eh? Doesn’t mean much really’, followed by ‘Europe is my biggest issue’ and ‘I don’t have any of the problems in the US that we have with people in Europe’. He really did not have much time to spend with me, shook hands and gave a general overview of the business challenges. I then left and went back to my room full of anger and disappointment. Such experiences reflect the strength of power associations at a relational level. My perception was that he seemed a little irrational, and consistent with Flyberg’s (1998) view that the greater the power, the less likely the rationality.

I spoke with my boss (Paul), stating that I felt de-valued and de-motivated by the meeting. Paul’s response was that the WWP was known for his brutality but that I should ignore it because he thought I was a great addition to the team. Leadership is a process of mutual interaction and identity (Borgelt & Falk, 2007) and this incident was indicative of the potential lack of mutuality with some leaders and their subordinates. This appeared to be an interesting area for further exploration.

Later that month Paul circulated a letter to all indirect staff (excluding the operatives in the manufacturing area). Its purpose was to allow people to reflect on the business performance and a ‘critical review’ of our performance ‘as a team’. The letter is an interesting insight into his leadership authority and power. It indicates throughout by the interface between ‘I’ and ‘we’ that staff and leadership are inseparably interconnected, whilst at the same time distinct from one another, as suggested by Granstrom (1996). Since this assertion indicates that the relationship is a reciprocal
one, he projects his desired state by describing his internal emotions. The language is emotive and designed to stimulate employees to action in a mutually beneficial way in order to achieve business requirements (Callahan, 2004; Whitaker, 1995).

The role and authority of the leader of the business is critical to group processes that exist in the company (Jarrett & Kellner, 1996). Underlying this authority are the tensions between compliance and resistance (Putnam & Boys, 2006). In a management meeting arising at the same time as this letter, Paul declared his frustration with internal politics and negative communication being perceived by senior management team members. He stated that it was his expectation that it would stop immediately and his expectation was not to be questioned. As there was no opportunity for exploring the reasons for poor communication or perceived politics, there was potential for resistance to an enforced condition. The tensions which existed between compliance and resistance, however, are difficult to control absolutely (Espedal, 2006).

Paul decided to conduct a group presentation to the workforce in February 2005, entitling it ‘State of the Nation’. I found this a curious title reflecting the business as a country, in a bounded state which seemed to infer a bounded rationality of practice in the business (following French & Vince, 1999). Communication was becoming an ongoing theme. The presentation indicated a number of conscious and unconscious processes. The ‘State of the Nation’ conjured an image of a man leading an important social institution with strong cultural connections and great responsibility. Using the language of national politics, he was aligning his role and its power at the highest level. He was projecting to employees a sense of control and responsibility. He had
intended for the presentation to applaud our successes and identify the steps that
needed to be taken so that the business could further evolve.

The presentation covered group performance, product development, facilities upgrade
and new product presentations. Group sales performance was up on last year but
profit was below expectations, largely due to product mix. He was confident that the
new products launched that year would improve the situation. After the meeting, the
feedback from employees through the Employee Representatives was that it was fun
but they only took away negatives. The outcome seemed to be indicative of a culture
that was embedded in negativity and was an inevitable legacy of the constant round of
redundancies that had arisen since September 2004. Despite the turnaround in
business performance, and the efforts the company was making to eliminate negative
feelings by positive statements, more mistrust and suspicion appeared to emanate
(following Miller & Stein, 1993). Mistrust and suspicion could be indicative of the
psychological withdrawal of employees.

Psychological withdrawal following such redundancy situations is not unexpected
(Miller, 1999) but the fact that management assume that employees’ feelings can be
shaped by them in some way may be problematic. Psychological safety may only be
realisable when employees feel that they can employ the self without fear of any
penalty (Kahn, 1990) in the social system of the business. The legacy of mass
redundancies is that it destabilises the business for a time as the remaining employees
deal with the loss of colleagues and the anxiety caused by mistrust of more
redundancies to come. As Stacey (1996) identifies, there needs to be an abandonment
of taken for granted assumptions and a creation of an environment that is open to question.

6.4.1 Management Structured Interview at PSEC

There appeared to be evidence of issues surrounding the management group, so in May 2005, I asked my peers if they would be willing to participate in the research for this thesis. They all agreed and the third Management Structured interview was issued which is provided in Appendix 5.

Initially, three colleagues did not respond to the structured interview and one had tried to undermine the process, stating 'why should I support you in gaining a qualification'. He shared his view with others. Later, he and one other allowed me to interview them. This may be seen as evidence of more defensive behaviour as it indicated that if he could undermine the process of exploration, and gain the support of others to resist the process in allegiance to him, there was no need for him to complete the process. I felt that this was an early indicator of defence mechanisms which served to avoid the need to reflect on his anxieties. It was an intriguing stance which did not fit the methodological process I had adopted. Each person had the right to decline to participate in the study at any time. After most of his colleagues responded, he then offered to be interviewed so that his opinions were anonymously accounted for in the review meeting afterwards. He said he had thought about it and felt that his views should be aired.
### Table 6.24  Structured Interview Results at PSEC – Notions of Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notions of Control</td>
<td>‘Tactically I have a lot of control, locally strategically most, not all, and strategically only a little’ [Frank]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘In the given context with our R&amp;D focus, I have 70% up to now but it needs to be improved’ [Mike]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘75%’ [Paul]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘At local level I believe I am empowered with a good level of control..... at corporate level, we naturally have less control, we are considered ‘less stable’ than some of our peers and consequently wield less clout’ [James]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘We control the decisions we make... support for those decisions is lacking’ [Lucy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Good to reasonable control, a lot of autonomy’ [Steve]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Total control, but not authority’ [Joe]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notions of control at PSEC, as shown in Table 6.24, are tied into participants’ perception of their control over tactical or task specific responsibilities. Following Mintzberg (1989), participants appear to adopt the notion that as managers, they are responsible for the specification, monitoring and evaluation of individual and collective activity. Work is typified as routine or tactical in nature. However, as Kärreman and Alvesson (2004) have stated, this tends to ignore the transactional nature of management as it involves a social process and interaction. One participant touches on this as they state that “support for those decisions is lacking”. Such a statement may provide a clue to the sense of control locally and an identity with others who either support, or are recipients of, that control. Managers may feel uncertain as to their ability to enact their authority due to confusion over social
identity which may not receive positive reinforcement through organizational experience (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Such experiences may impact upon the participants' ability to identify with the power that they enact as part of their authority as managers. The answers to this aspect of the structured interview may prove useful. Some typical comments are illustrated in Table 6.25.

Table 6.25  **Structured Interview Results at PSEC - Notions of Power**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notions of Power</td>
<td>'Power is not widely spread, but it should not be, it should be shared' [Lucy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'...from my experience, ...some departments enable and some do so to a lesser degree, this is often to do with the style of leader' [James]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Power is spread probably more than people realise, but still not enough' [Paul]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Not at all....the organisation tends to listen to those who speak' [Mike]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Not really, some areas are much better at this delegation than others; in some areas it does not exist at all' [Frank]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'There are boundaries of decision making at different levels. It's too wide sometimes and doesn't consider the impact beyond needs' [Joe]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'There's misguided delegation, there's no interest in that' [Steve]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to gain control over the resources available to management, it is argued that power is utilised in order to influence their resources to undertake behaviours which meet the organizational goals (Braynion, 2004; Handy, 1993). Therefore, management
thinking around these two aspects may proffer further understanding about their interrelationships and application in practice. There are indications that focussing on work that they control acts as a counter to the anxiety that they may feel about the distribution of power and the boundaries of control. Focussing on work, therefore, may offer them additional safety, an antidote for anxiety, and as Jarrett and Kellner (1996) point out, an opportunity for healing and individual growth.

There are some interesting paradoxes regarding manager interpretations about these notions. There appears to be a general belief that they control, at least locally, what they do but that they believe there should be more power available or more power shared. There is an inference here that power is legitimate in an hierarchical sense, in so far as ‘I control what I do and therefore I have power’ but there remains a sense that there is more to be had, or indeed, more to be shared. Notions of support for control are inferred here and this touches on hierarchical structure and channels of sanctioned activity (Hardy & Clegg, 2006). Sanctioned activity relates to social identity as some participants may feel more empowered to act than others.

Underlying these notions are considerations about individual identity. If there is a degree of confusion about management ability to control and do so by their power or influence on others, then they may be confronted with a dilemma of management. The dilemma here stems from self-identity. If the production of identity emanates from power relations and therefore confers a positive experience to the recipient (Knights & Willmott, 1989) it is arguable that the absence of that clarity could create dissatisfaction.
Table 6.26  Structured Interview Results at PSEC – Notions of Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notions of Trust</td>
<td>‘With certain members of our senior management team there does exist a lot of openness and trust between different levels of our organisation. With others, there is little if any. Again much of this is due to the trust in the individual and the respect which he/she is viewed.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Danger: effectiveness of instant heroing’ [Mike]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘In most cases I think there’s trust, but there could be more openness and better communication, which would improve trust even more’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Between some, factors, length of service, respect, contribution’ [Joe]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Within my area of responsibility, yes; within the overall organization, much less; within the exec team, some very strong supportive alliances, but there should be more – there is insufficient mutual respect’ [James]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Distrust permeates from the top &gt;&gt; downwards’ [Lucy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Between some levels but there’s a lack of respect’ [Joe]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Yes, more so than not’ [Paul]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘There is, but not enough, there’s still suspicion about what is going on’ [Steve]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trust is related to the dependability of the other party, whereas support for others means that colleagues reveal that expectation in practical and outwardly facing ways. In this way it is proposed that trust and support have mutuality. To engage with others trustingly is more than a belief and knowledge; it is emotionally located and morally loaded (Fineman, 2007). According to the participants, and as illustrated above in table 6.26, there are issues in relation to trust between management group members. Trust in one case is governed by the respect they have for the individual. For others it
is tied into notions of communication and openness. Concepts of hurt and distrust permeating from the top all indicate problems with group affiliation (Woolthuis, Hillebrand & Nooteboom, 2005). This problem also has the potential to cause anxiety as a lack of trust may result in an increase in individual vulnerability.

It appears that there are certain alliances within the group but a level of distrust outside of these inner circles. As Jarrett and Kellner (1996) indicate, the politicized arena of leaders' behaviour, plus the characteristics of the work group, are frequently a source of anxiety and defensiveness, not safety. If there is an advantage for individuals to work collaboratively in organizations, in a way so as to gain mutual affiliation and support, the absence of it has the potential to increase anxiety (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Building trust may require participants to have both the ability to form expectations about the future outcomes of collaborations with others, and a willingness to take a risk. Expectation formulation may be connected with notions of mutual support, which are dealt with next.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notions of Mutual Support</td>
<td>'..within the exec team – some very strong supportive alliances but there should be more – there is insufficient mutual respect amongst some of the elements for there to be an environment of mutual support throughout the team' [Frank]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'On the same level, there is support for those who didn’t lose status/influence/responsibility in the merger, else envy' [Mike]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I hope so, but fear not as much as I would like' [Paul]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Invariably those of 'like mind' (the new thinkers) are usually supportive and those of the opposite style are less so, in fact sometimes obstructive to change' [James]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Absolutely not!' [Lucy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'to some extent, limited, old guard/new guard' [Steve]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mutual support requires the establishment of an agreed set of joint purposes (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). In practice, it is evident that even if participants feel confident with the activities they are undertaking, it can be difficult to be certain about what support they will receive, as demonstrated above in Table 6.27. The indicators here are that levels of trust and mutual support as an entire group fail to provide the safety that members need to feel. There is an impression that collusion exists between certain members and within the group in general. I reflected that these aspects may indicate a distorted mindset which could lead to inappropriate and dysfunctional behaviour, almost creating a self fulfilling prophecy of group experience. In this way, an individual could adopt self defence mechanisms to avoid confronting these issues, probably unconsciously, and affirm the modus operandi of the group.
If this was the case then taking a view of group communication and dealing with difficult issues may offer more insight to these perceptions. Some typical comments are listed in Table 6.28.

### Table 6.28 Structured Interview Results at PSEC – Openness of Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication &amp; Potential of Hidden Agendas</td>
<td>'Overall, not really; between some elements there are absolutely no hidden agendas. But amongst others there exists significant hidden agendas.' [Frank]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'The problem is that you always have to act also politically since there are colleagues with hidden agendas who survive so far very well with this behaviour' [Mike]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Sadly not' [Paul]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Hidden agendas are often 'survival tools'; there still remains a culture of 'blame change' or just blame itself.' [James]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Politics are a fact of life...there are (almost always) hidden agendas' [Lucy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Some, generally no, actually yes, hidden agendas come culturally' [Joe]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Only have agendas not well articulated' [Steve]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answers to the structured interview so far indicate that there are tensions inherent within the management system and the experience of the participants. Interactions with others allow the potential for homogeneity to arise from heterogeneity (following Antonacopoulou & Chiva, 2007). Such interactions promote a level of engagement with others to act collectively. There is evidence that participants felt that communication was veiled by a perception of hidden agendas. Such perceptions have
the potential to sensitise individuals to a particular way of acting with others (Carlile, 2002), thus reinforcing any perceived perception and any potential individual anxiety.

How participants dealt with difficult issues as a group may offer further evidence of these perceptions in practice. Illustrative comments are shown in Table 6.29.

Table 6.29  Structured Interview Results at PSEC – Dealing with Difficult Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Issues</td>
<td>‘Addressed – Yes...solved or responded to – No’ [Lucy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Not always, quite frequently I’d prefer to put the ‘adversaries’ in a ring together but often this is avoided in preference of a smoother solution that often doesn’t cure the root problem, therefore it surfaces again in the future’ [James]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Generally speaking, yes’ [Paul]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Yes – high level of collegiality to address difficult problems’ [Mike]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Not at all; there is a reluctance to face up to some issues which are tough to tackle’ [Frank]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Sometimes, some are not addressed due to associations/alliances.’ [Joe]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Not really, left to float to surface but not followed up’ [Steve]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There appears to be a perception that ‘hidden agendas’ are a fact of life and recognition that these serve as ‘survival tools’ in a highly politicised environment. There seems to be a basic assumption that in order to ‘survive’, executives limit their contribution to ensure that their anxieties are contained and their level of exposure minimised. It was an intriguing notion and one which has resonances of the work of...
Hirschhorn (1985), whose model (Figure 2.2) introduced in Chapter 2 (page 31) of this thesis, identified the difficult consequences of these notions. The model indicates that there are two competing processes here arising. On the one hand the members focus on task achievement, with the authority to act, with a supportive structural environment to achieve that task and focus on the work activity. On the other hand the risk associated with the activity could be perceived to be high, causing inherent anxieties and the creation of social defence behaviours.

This tantalizing balance of competing processes was exacerbated by the struggle to deal with difficult issues openly. If there was a perception of hidden agendas, then it would be difficult for individual members to deal with their inherent anxiety in exposing the difficult issues for discussion. However, the complexities of the situation indicate that the group was split. Some felt that difficult issues were addressed, while others felt that their issues were ignored. There are fundamental paradoxes in these notions. On the one hand there is not enough trust, and a perception of hidden agendas. On the other hand there was a split view that difficult issues were addressed openly. This demonstrates that people differ in their motivational patterns and that leaders are not one dimensional characters (Kets De Vries, 2004).

However, in order to address difficult issues openly, the right environment must be created and the leader should understand that his/her followers need opportunities to explore these matters (Kets De Vries, 2004). Nevertheless, the management group meets once per month and the agenda is issued in advance. The opportunity for a genuine and open discussion about difficult issues never seems to materialise and after five hours in discussion managers just want to leave the meetings. By the time
'any other business' is proposed most members spend their time closing files and checking blackberries. This type of reaction, commonly referred to as a 'flight' response (Bion 1959), creates distance between the request and the response, thus avoiding dealing with the issues. I have heard a manager say as they walk into the meeting 'I’m going to bring to the agenda the back stabbing that goes on around here' and goes away having not raised the matter at all. When I asked them why not, the response was 'To be honest, I could not be bothered and what’s the point anyway, I’ll just piss off the Managing Director and get it in the neck afterwards’. The issues of flight and anxiety containment were ever more apparent in the group.

The aspect of the relationship with the leader in this case was explored in more depth in the structured interview in terms of whether members had opportunities to learn and grow and whether they were satisfied by the way they were managed. The answers to these questions may highlight the relationship issues with their boss and the underlying tensions within.
Table 6.30  Structured Interview Results at PSEC – Opportunity for Self Growth and Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Subject</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to Grow and Develop</td>
<td>'I only have opportunity in the local business unit' [Frank]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Not at all'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Yes' [Mike]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Limited' [Steve] [Paul]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Without a desire to grow 'corporately' there could be a better method of developing local growth, not sure how though, sorry!' [James]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Potential is always there – someone in a position to evaluate this is necessary' [Lucy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'No there’s no real desire, my performance reviews are half-hearted' [Joe]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to this question indicate that in terms of growth and opportunity, most members interpreted this as a question about advancement, rather than personal growth and development, as shown in table 6.30. It was interesting to note that members of management were outwardly looking, projecting the question into the hierarchical structure. Internalisation was avoided, lacking the reflective thinking of whether they needed to learn and grow as an individual. The focus was on function rather than self or emulating the need for recognition and praise. Recognition here was seen as occurring through advancement and one suspects, the attachment of additional power. As Kakabadse (2000) points out, this relationship could be consequential of our understanding of the interpretation of leadership, where leadership is examined from the perspective of role and team contribution, rather than
personal characteristics. In answering the structured interviews, I suspected that the members of the group were considering the question from the notion of leader. I also felt that this reflected the culture of the business where everyone was evaluated on goal success but no one in management received a personal appraisal or development review.

The bonus salary payment structure was evaluated by the Managing Director (MD) from his perception of contribution. The personal aspects just did not seem to be accounted for at this time. MD’s perception may be seen to be clouded by the personal and individual relationship that he had with each member of the group.

Table 6.31  
Structured Interview Results at PSEC – Satisfied by the way they are Managed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with management</td>
<td>'There is no 'management' .... But at this level, there should be instead, respect and trust to do one's job and less intrigue' [Lucy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'In most aspects yes, communication is extremely open and good.... I believe(back to decision making) that many of us involve the boss in more decisions that he needs to be on the critical path for, I think this is due to a remaining lack of synergy and strategic understanding between some managers... If we agreed and adhered to a strategy, we would experience far less conflict' [James]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'No, not at all' [Paul]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Yes – like the level of freedom to act' [Mike]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'No – I am not really managed at all' [Frank]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Not managed by him – he shows no care' [Joe]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'No, more involved rather than managed' [Steve]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The general perception of the members of the group was that they were not managed by their boss, as shown in table 6.31. There were differing views over whether this was necessary. Notions of trust and confidence were more important to one person, while not having to need manager involvement was more important to another. The general view was that they were not managed, a point that is arguable. Jacques (1955) highlighted that if a manager had a discretionary role, that is, more than 51% of it was up to individual discretion, then there might not be a requirement for management at all (Antonacopoulou & Chiva, 2007).

However, as Kakabadse (2000) identifies, if there are a number of discretionary roles, each possessing a number of visions and ways of operating the business, the impression this gives to the remainder of the business can be problematic. Such confusion has the potential to create division and not encourage the sort of environment necessary to explore openly the problems and issues that surface when an organization is in tension. Identification with the leader has important considerations with follower identity (Braynion, 2004). Acceptance of leader power (Hersey et al, 2001) and referent power must be important if the head of company wishes to build trust and confidence. A perception that individuals are not managed or lead by their leader could result in more group fragmentation as such teams do not unify under their accepted leader.

This is exemplified by Paul’s discussions with me about the group. He had mentioned that his frustrations about Steve were increasing. He felt that Steve was colluding with Joe and Eric and was seeking to topple him from his position. He had discussed with Eric on a number of occasions his perceived complicity in politics but Eric always
denied any responsibility. On one occasion Eric informed him that he did not believe in politics but did believe he was the mouth piece for others to speak through. I felt that this was an interesting metaphor for distancing himself from the concept of politics and that of a genuine need to communicate the wishes of others. Steve did not feel the need for a rapport with Paul because he had made strong links with corporate staff and would frequently consult them if confronted by Paul.

It was certainly a discordant group with conflicts being kept suppressed and revealing themselves in underhand behaviour, cynicism, scepticism and an insular departmental approach. There was evidence that Paul, as leader of the company, did not manage, other than in the management meetings, and his direct reports kept their distance. If as Learmouth (2003) states, every leader should help individuals achieve their targets, so that both leaders and followers become enmeshed in circles of power that bend them in the achievement of the company’s needs, in this business something needed to change.

I had planned to summarise the findings of the management structured interviews in a group discussion. My peers were keen to have an open dialogue about the themes emerging and one said ‘I’d like to see the boss’ face when he hears about the lack of support he gives us’. Others felt it was a good opportunity to examine the ‘back stabbing’ and highly political nature of our group relations. I approached Paul, asking him for permission to arrange the meeting. He was supportive and suggested we tag it on to a management meeting for discussion. Every time I tried to get time for this on the agenda, there was always something more important to deal with; it never got discussed. I summarised the themes individually to colleagues who were keen for
feedback. Not everyone wanted feedback and only three fully engaged in a feedback process. There were no surprises they said and only disappointment that we could not create a situation for open dialogue with the whole group. In some ways, I felt responsible for raising an expectation that I felt hampered to deliver.

Management meetings continued monthly until August 2005. The September one was missed as everyone was tied up in trade conferences and shows to launch our new products. The October 2005 meeting was a brief one, catching up on trade news and market reception to the new products, and then they stopped. No formal management meetings were held between October 2005 and May 2006. Heads of department were running their departments, completing management reports every month and working within the alliances they had forged with other group members. The business was profitable and continued to reengineer with more job losses between October and December 2005. The mood of the business was ‘flat’ with little enthusiasm beyond the tasks of departmental achievement. A few managers commented that we were a successful business, despite a weak leader. It was a difficult environment.

In February 2006, Paul decided to hold a celebration for the 35 years service of Eric. A restaurant in London was booked for the celebration. Two members flew in from Switzerland and it was anticipated that it would be a good opportunity for team building. Paul arrived late but the dinner went very well. At 9pm Paul announced he was going home. Everyone else was staying overnight and I recalled everyone looked at each other, lifting their eyes to the room. I took him to one side and asked whether he could stay overnight as an opportunity to get to know everyone on a social level. He was tired, he said, and left. Two others left, including Eric, soon after, retiring to
bed after what they described as a long day. Four of us continued into the bar. We had always enjoyed good business relations and it was no surprise that we carried on for a bit longer.

This event reveals the extent of the breakdown in the group. The sense of group, at least at management level was distant, displaced and typified by its splitting into separate like-minded individuals. As Kets De Vries (2004) highlights, when anxiety rises in an organization, executives rely on existing structures to contain that anxiety, regressing towards smaller groups that give them the safety they need to counter those feelings. Of course, it is also plausible that other members were genuinely tired but in discussions the following day, some mentioned that they did not see the point when Paul was not present.

I decided to speak to Paul on a number of topics the day after. Firstly, to open my concerns regarding the fragmentation of the group and his role in that and secondly, to explore the development of a set of competencies that we could share as a group to change behaviour. I was anxious about the way he would receive my first point but to my surprise he agreed wholeheartedly with my observations. He had been conscious that he had let things 'get out of hand' and wanted to get his team working together. We then explored the types of behaviour to which he and others could espouse, developing an initial framework for me to build upon. I felt this was a breakthrough, but on reflection was left wondering if I was enacting the role of 'mother', and he was responding in a positive way for a quiet life. I dismissed these thoughts, considering that I felt motivated with the task of creativity in an area of work I enjoyed. I did
realise that what was happening was a 'pairing' with Paul as a way to encounter group
behaviour (Bion, 1959), but selfishly felt it was necessary and positive.

6.5 Leadership Competencies

I launched the competencies in draft for comment by the executives in April and by
August presented them at the next management team meeting for final approval.
Defining the competencies as a 'A future-orientated set of behaviours, skills and
knowledge designed to deliver outstanding organizational success', I revealed the four
core competencies and fifteen supporting competencies I felt would help us solve our
inertia. The response from the group was great. Although no-one would commit to the
training for themselves, they were prepared to release their middle management to
attend. The problem in the company, they said, was lack of development for the
middle management. I felt this was another indication of a reluctance of the group to
embrace the issues. They were defending their reluctance to attend by a focus on what
they perceived to be more compelling needs. I suspected that this may be an
avoidance of individual development needs.

On launching the leadership training, the response from middle managers was
excellent but almost every course feedback form stated "When are the executives
going on the course'; 'how can you expect us to use the basic principles, when the
Executives don't'; 'Change should be top, down'. I spoke with the group attending the
course, at the next course event, and mentioned the comments. We explored the issues
that they had confronted when trying to implement the new behaviours back at their
work places. One commented that it was difficult to focus on the issue or problem,
when one of the executives just 'called you an idiot'. Another commented that he had
spent two hours in a problem solving session with his team, to be interrupted by one executive saying 'no, that's not the way you want to do it, we're doing it this way'. Collectively I was faced with a group that were of a mind that there was no point in learning new skills.

Such social defences highlighted the difficulty with management change programmes which exclude the top levels in the process of change. As Gabriel (1999) suggests, such activities attempt to exert powerful normative controls but in this case normative associations were being limited by executive acceptance. Resistance to change was evoked by the mixed messages being received by middle managers. For the change programme to be successful it was essential that the outcomes must be consistent with the subjectivities of employees experience (Hardy & Clegg, 2006).

The middle managers and myself discussed personal control and I asked them whether they thought that if everyone in the room (there were twenty middle managers present and another fourteen in the second session) changed their behaviour, did they feel it would be a critical enough mass to change the culture. Many pondered on it but most in the room said that without their manager’s support, it would not happen. But they added ‘they would give it a go’. I communicated these comments to the executives, with little feedback, other than that everyone agreed they would attend an overview but ‘were busy at the moment’. I postulated that their responses were another social defence mechanism against potential anxiety that they may have possessed about the training.
6.6 Executive Meetings Return

It had been eight months since the last formal executive meetings, although groups were getting together ad hoc to discuss their issues and tactical matters in the meantime. Colleagues increased their complaints that Paul 'didn’t seem to care', with comments like 'what does he do all day' and 'he’s texting all the time, or on his mobile, it’s bloody annoying'. Paul’s distraction was seen to portray a lack of interest in the business and participants consequently questioned the identity of leader as someone to be respected, where power was naturally exerted (following Knights & Willmott, 1989). The boundaries of identity with Paul were becoming blurred and this created social defences against the negative feelings this manifested in others.

Three of the Executives came to see me, stating that as Head of Human Resources, it was up to me to 'sort him out' and get him 'back on the straight and narrow'. Avoiding the issue for them became my issue and I grasped the mettle. I asked him for a chat and explained that he appeared distracted and had been for some time. I mentioned the time keeping and the texting which I admitted from my own experience was a constant distraction. I explained that everyone was giving him support by working longs hours but we wanted him to lead, using the metaphor that 'our ship felt rudderless'. His personal life story came out and I realised I had started to take on the role of counsellor.

He said he would change, 'he knew what he had to do' and that day we all received an e-mail from him stating 'It has been a while now since we had an Exec Meeting and we need to resume these meetings as a priority. I would like to hold these meetings every two weeks and xxx will prepare the schedule so that you can put the dates in
your diaries.' The meetings started in June and lasted until the end of November. There were no further meetings until April 2007.

During that period I had spoken with him on two other occasions and my role as counsellor became even more absorbing. His personal world was colliding with my work world and I began to find it wearing. The identity of him as my leader started to become shrouded by his personal identity. I found it confusing. I felt that his dysfunction as a leader was not only contributing to organizational problems but also had impacted upon my identity as well.

In this climate, I felt it would be useful to explore the meanings that managers had given to the current situation and circulated a second structured interview. Ten structured interviews were issued, three returned. Of the three that were returned, one was headed 'this had better be confidential'. The rest were either too busy, not willing or did not send any response. I realised that the dynamics of the group had changed and considered that either the trust that had engendered the good response to the first survey was diminishing or they had simply lost interest in the concept of collaborative inquiry.

There is evidence here that the identity with the leader is a critical factor in dealing with work place anxiety. The leader's position also lends itself to a transference of others anxiety onto his position as the leader creates or declines to create the requisite environmental safety to explore the difficult issues. Another situational factor in dealing with surfacing anxiety was a focus on task behaviour.
Over time, managers started to emulate the behaviour from the top. By focussing on their tasks and not on the business as a whole, activities became concentric to their departmental goals. Problems elsewhere in the business became someone else’s problem, executives started to criticise and wanted to take control, one suggesting ‘if only they would give me control of that department, I would sort it out’ and I became focussed on employee welfare, communications and team dynamics.

6.7 Third Case Study Review

Early indicators of social defences against anxiety were revealed in the early days with the business. Managers opted not to address difficult people issues pending my arrival. This indicated a reluctance to address issues, which may cause additional anxieties, and which could be displaced by referral to someone new. Disassociation with events and displacement of emotional considerations suggested that these defence mechanisms were indicative of deeper organizational issues.

Notions of role identity and self-efficacy were challenged as assumptions were confronted by negative or opposite viewpoints, without opportunity for challenge or exploration. Notions of control were strongly associated with hierarchical structures as relational understanding was brought into question.

Use of language in leadership was used as a way to void the negative associations with which individuals were wrestling in dealing with business change. Such language steered a path away from conflict and towards a sense of commercial rationality and togetherness. Distancing from what was interpreted as an essential business process meant that individuals could disassociate themselves for actions that
could potentially cause them additional anxiety. Devolving responsibility for handling redundancies, for example, meant that executives could avoid the emotional consequences of those activities.

The tensions between resistance and compliance were indicated in the exchanges and resonances from business communications. Participants started to become cynical about the leader’s identity and openness towards questioning. Such resistance was evidential of social defences within the management group which were starting to break through the boundaries of self control. Communication techniques were adopted to drive positive associations with business strategies. This had limited impact or effectiveness, as it failed to address the need for psychological safety and an environment which allowed the questioning of assumptions.

The management structured interview indicated that management anxieties stemmed from some perceptions that power was unequally distributed and that there was limited opportunity to expand control. A lack of trust between management group members indicated problems with group affiliation and notions of the management group as a safe harbour to explore difficult issues were remote. Interestingly, managers felt that hidden agendas were a fact of business life and there was a shared assumption that in this way, anxieties were plausibly contained.

It appeared that growth and development opportunities were centred on external needs and desire for recognition or more control. There was little awareness of the need for self growth which was not unusual in an organisation typical of most organizations today where there tends to be an ends rather than a means focus (Pfarrer et al, 2008). 233
There was little evidence of the recognition that the human side of organizational life should be addressed and owned by managers.

Leader identity and distance became further indicators of management group dysfunction and there was evidence of increasing politics within the group. Power relations were exclusive and resulted in fragmentation within the group. Political exchanges became frequent as managers attempted to leverage their relationships with others senior to Paul in the hierarchical structure in order to address their needs. These needs, however, appeared to centre on political or controlling aspects of management. Anxieties were still contained by defence mechanisms that sought to undermine existing structures and social relationships.

Avoidance in dealing with feedback from the management structured interview indicated reluctance by Paul to receive feedback from the group. Of course, feedback would be around general themes emerging in the research but I sensed that he felt anxiety regarding his own failings in some way. It was easier to commit to the feedback session but never allow time for it to occur. Thus he was able to continue to contain his anxiety by limiting the opportunity for exploration and examination of individual and group experiences.

Managers tended to resort to small groupings of like-minded individuals, each giving emotional comfort to others, suppressing the anxiety that remained undeclared by projecting their fears and concerns, mainly onto Paul. His behaviour became more distant from the group physically and emotionally, with his self protection resulting in
disassociation with others. The widening of the gap between members and their leader created more opportunity for frustration and sub grouping.

Change was attempted through the joint evolution and agreement of a set of behavioural competencies each business leader could adopt. The management group excluded themselves from the learning, justifying such avoidance tactics as a desire to implement new learning to the middle managers as agents for change. This activity backfired as it brought to awareness in lower levels of the hierarchy the disconnection between management desire and management interest.

These notions summarise the third and final case study and bring us to the next section of the thesis which draws together the findings of the studies and the opportunities for extending areas of research.
PART 3 DISCOVERY AND MEANING

There are two chapters to this part of the thesis. Chapter Seven describes the Interpretation of the Findings including the use of triangulation to connect the three case studies together. Chapter Eight presents the Conclusions to the Research and Implications for Practice. This chapter includes the Limitations of the Research and Future Development of the Approach.

The models emerging from the studies and review are discussed with the intention of drawing together the research findings. In addition, clarification is given to their implication for practice for organizations during organizational change and phases of learning. The models represent my interpretations of the experiences and the results of the collaborative enquiry together with, and external to, the participants undertaking the study. The models serve to clarify my own thinking about the nature and impact of anxiety in work groups, and the effects of anxiety on learning and change at a management, group and organizational level of analysis.
CHAPTER SEVEN Interpretation of the findings

7.0 Introduction

As Fineman (2007) usefully states, it has become a much repeated cliché that the only constant in business today is change. With change an altered perception of the status quo may arise, accompanied by a variation to the emotional condition of those experiencing that change (Crane, 1980; Vince, 2002). Emotional reactions are therefore an inevitable consequence of change and this study sought to understand those emotions, and in particular anxiety, in the senior management teams of those organizations studied. Managers represent the controlling interests of the case studies reported herein and it is suggested that their experience has a major impact on their respective organizations.

It was proposed that to understand better the nature and causes of anxiety required an exploration of individual experience, collective practices and reflection in action of experience, and meaning and interpretation of events in the senior management teams studied. Participatory action research through the medium of three case studies offered a vehicle to share experience and amalgamate understanding in the here and now of lived experience. The purpose of this chapter is to draw together the findings of the studies in relation to the research questions:

1. **What is the nature and impact of anxiety in senior management teams?**

2. **What are the effects of anxiety on learning and change within these teams?**
To do so, the remainder of the chapter is structured in the following way. The next sections, entitled Substantive Findings of the Studies and Methodological Issues Arising from the Studies, restate the concrete findings of the studies as they relate to the purpose of the research, and what methodological issues arose in the course of the case studies. The Emergent Concepts and Models segment expands on the models developed during the research process and which I consider may be valuable for use in organizations confronted with issues that may stem from behavioural factors, of a type experienced in the teams studied, in other senior management teams.

7.1 Substantive Findings of the Studies

The studies sought to interweave a number of schools of thought using participatory action research. The studies were underpinned by group relations and filtered by interpretivism through reflection. This approach was adopted so that an exploration of individual, group and organizational implications of notions of anxiety on change and learning could occur (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Reason & Marshall, 2001). The approach was moderated by grounded theory which governed the simultaneous analysis of gathered data, with each construct complementing each other throughout the research process (Gummesson, 2006). The intention was to move away from a more positivist approach to understanding towards what was considered to be a more comprehensive and transformational method than was considered permissible by such an approach. Thus, participatory action research was felt to be a pragmatic utilisation of method to suit the nature and context of the research topic, the chosen research process, and to address the research questions.
The literature reviewed as part of this thesis had indicated that there appeared to be little public knowledge regarding the implications of anxiety on work teams, particularly during periods of change. This was particularly so when considered from the perspective of a practicing manager, working in tandem with her colleagues, in a multiple-case approach. That is to say, the literature did not generally consider the lived experience in the ‘here and now’ of persons confronted by conditions which may invoke anxiety. The literature review suggested that there was the need for research in an area largely ignored publicly, or avoided (Baruch & Lambert, 2007; Briner, 1999; French & Vince, 1999; Jarrett & Kellner 1996), and which could be addressed by exploring within organizations how individuals interpret and make sense of these experiences. Also indicated was the need to explore these matters within a growing framework of change and uncertainty in businesses today, as organizations adapt to new and constant demands.

The studies address these issues by demonstrating an understanding of how the participants gave meaning to, made sense of, and examined their experiences as far as they desired to understand their situations. Individuals adopted defences against the negative associations such understanding created and used these defence mechanisms to deal with the experiences they encountered. In each study, the participants gave information and clarity to the topics being explored. Some learned to develop a new way of understanding through reflective techniques, others were not so open to experience, but all engaged in the process of understanding to a larger or lesser extent. In each study, therefore, the experiences reflect the real time lived realities of the participants, including the author, and are a testimony to the changes within and external to, those individuals in the practice of managing.
The literature review further indicated that many of the assumptions and theories associated with research of this type had not been tested in longitudinal studies of this nature. Thus, those assumptions and theories were open to investigation and examination. The literature focused on a number of main areas: the psychodynamic nature of change; a focus on two main constructs, stress and satisfaction that often neglect to explore how those aspects are felt and understood by the participants, largely due to a rejection of self-reported case studies or an over focus on individual abnormal behaviours; and a call for workplace exploration in context and practical development. The studies herein reported sought to address some of the gaps of previous research, in terms of how anxiety manifests itself in managers, manager groups and organizations; and how this manifestation impacts upon organisational change and learning. The thesis was partly informed by that understanding of the literature and sought to explore further some of the gaps highlighted by the literature review. The remainder of this chapter indicates the substantive findings of the research studies.

7.1.1 First Order and Second Order Findings

First Order Findings are defined as those findings discovered within each case study, generated through a number of processes. These processes are contained within the interpretation and meaning given to the outputs of structured interview analysis and review. The trustworthiness of the data, following Lincoln and Guba (1985), is established in two ways. First, through making a distinction between First Order Findings, which indicate the terms, categories and concepts arising from the participants. Second, co-joining such concepts with the researcher’s theoretical interpretation of what is arising.
In the case of MDC, interpretation was enabled through a process of interpretive interactionism (Denzin, 1989b; Genat, 2009; Sheehan, 2000) as participants themselves gave meaning to the themes emerging from the coding process. Such participant interaction has the potential to offer a group response to these findings and to develop a collective sense of experience. This collective understanding has the potential to develop categories of meaning as they subsist for individuals and the senior management team of which they are part. In the two other cases, theme generation was developed through a focus on data analysis and interpretation.

The Second Order Findings refer to the triangulation concepts at a multi-relational and cross-case level of interpretation. Such interpretation has the potential to generate understanding as to whether the causes and impact of anxiety in senior management teams are shared by other similar sized organizations. This type of understanding may offer additional insight to an area of research which the literature review indicated had limited cross case and longitudinal approaches.

Figure 7.1, page 242, Triangulation of Three Case Studies, usefully summarises the First and Second Order Findings resultant from each case study review. Figure 7.1 represents the First Order Findings in yellow as presented within case and summarised in chapter 6 above. The Second Order Findings are illustrated in green as they relate to the convergence of three case studies, by applying triangulation methodology inter and cross case (following Creswell, 2006; Yin, 1994).
Figure 7.1 Triangulation of Three Case Studies

### Intra-Case Finding

#### EVIDENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study 1</th>
<th>Evidence Nature of Anxiety</th>
<th>Interpretation Impact of Anxiety</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MDC</td>
<td>Leader Identity</td>
<td>Critique, ridicule, rejection, parody</td>
<td>Breakdown in social connections (Boethius, 1999)</td>
<td>Reluctance of businesses to engage with human processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power and Control</td>
<td>Lack of trust, projection, transference, conflict avoidance, lack of group cohesion</td>
<td>Struggle with conscious appraisal of here and now (Torbert, 1991)</td>
<td>Difficulty in addressing emotional issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mutuality &amp; Hidden Agendas</td>
<td>Resistance, suspicion</td>
<td>Container and contained (Bion, 1959; Jacques 1974)</td>
<td>Anxiety created by, and symptomatic of, organizational issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reliance on system of work</td>
<td>Change averse</td>
<td>Blurred boundaries of rationality (Bovey &amp; Hede, 2001)</td>
<td>Limits to understanding of self and other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### EVIDENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study 2</th>
<th>Evidence Nature of Anxiety</th>
<th>Interpretation Impact of Anxiety</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TSC</td>
<td>Transference and Associations with other</td>
<td>Mistrust, function/role association</td>
<td>Mismatch reality and subconscious (Kets de Vries, 2004)</td>
<td>Containment of defence behaviours through interconnected organizational processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authority, Power and Dependency</td>
<td>Deflection, role avoidance, power erosion, lack of or too much trust</td>
<td>Legitimate power restricted, deference to superior (Hardy &amp; Clegg, 2006). Lack of trust (Fineman, 2003)</td>
<td>Perceived boundaries of imagined control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leader identity</td>
<td>Contained in the practice of others</td>
<td>Empathy, transfer of anxiety onto others (Ligon, Hunter &amp; Mumford, 2008)</td>
<td>Difficulty in creating ‘safe harbour’ for addressing anxiety causation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notions of control</td>
<td>Knowledge evasion, dependency, limited decision making, negativity, compliance</td>
<td>Powerful normative controls (Hardy &amp; Clegg, 2006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### EVIDENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study 3</th>
<th>Evidence Nature of Anxiety</th>
<th>Interpretation Impact of Anxiety</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSEC</td>
<td>Leader Identity</td>
<td>Communication effectiveness, resistance, mistrust, suspicion</td>
<td>Tensions between compliance and resistance (Patnam &amp; Boys, 2006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mutuality</td>
<td>Confused social identity</td>
<td>Ignore social process of work (Karreman &amp; Alvesson, 2004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power and Control</td>
<td>Focus on tactics, structure, position</td>
<td>Channels of sanctioned activity (Hardy &amp; Clegg, 2006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Lack of trust, vulnerability, risk aversion</td>
<td>Lack of mutual affiliation and support (Vangen &amp; Huxham, 2003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult issues</td>
<td>Avoidance, hidden agendas for survival</td>
<td>Containment, fight/flight (Bion, 1959; Hirschhorn, 1985)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Developed for the purpose of this thesis
7.1.2 Case Study One – MDC: First Order Findings

MDC offered a rich source of data as the process of discovery was supported intra-case by the participants themselves and inter-case by the organization. Thus, the process of collaborative enquiry supported the engagement of participants in interpretive and interactive analysis (Dick, Stringer & Huxham, 2009; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The concept emerges from interpretations of the lived experience of others and an evaluation of whether that experience develops further understanding of the subject matter (Coghlan, 2009; Huxham & Vaugen, 2000; Kolb, 1984). Emergent theme generation moved beyond the boundaries of researcher analysis in the case, towards a unified understanding of organizational phenomena, as the researcher and the MDC participants jointly evaluated their lived experience.

In answering the Research Questions ‘What is the nature and impact of anxiety in senior management teams?’ and ‘What are the effects of anxiety on learning and change within these teams?’ the results from the MDC case study revealed that there were a number of manifestations of anxiety in the senior management team. The outcome of the structured interview analysis, together with a collective review revealed a number of themes. Leader identity and its associations appeared to be a significant factor impacting senior management team relationships. There was evidence that a feeling of disconnect between the leader and the members of the team resulted in a set of largely unconscious responses to this phenomenon and a pattern of social defence behaviours against what the MD was trying to achieve (following Bain, 1998; Hyde & Thomas, 2002; Kets de Vries, 2004; Ligon, Hunter & Mumford, 2008; Vince, 2002.).
Leader resistance became a focal point of change resistance but it was subtle and
difficult to identify and address. The difficulty arose because early meetings with the
leader were veiled by a cosmetic sense of togetherness (Bourne & Walker, 2005; Brown, 2000; Obholzer & Roberts, 1999); 'cosmetic' because in team meetings all
appeared to agree with the direction the MD was taking. Post meeting, however, such
agreement appeared to fracture as splinter groups were created to forge alliances with
like-minded individuals who held different views to those of the MD and/or their
colleagues.

Humour, parody and individual distancing from the MD’s approach were indicators
that there was a lack of group cohesion and a struggle with a conscious appraisal of
the here and now of lived experiences (Torbert, 1991). There was evidence that
individual managers and sub groups were preserving a pathway which avoided any
potential anxiety that change was manifesting by adopting a number of social
defences against anxiety which distanced them from what was happening. Social
connections within the senior management team either broke down or individuals
converged with like-minded others who were prepared to bolster their resistance or
avoidance of change requirements (following Boethius, 1999; Clarke, Brown &
Hailey, 2009; Foucault, 1988). Notions of trust and mutuality are therefore implied in
this convergence of what are considered to be trustworthy individuals.

There was evidence that the power relationships between team members and others in
the organization were starting to collapse. Following Foucault (1977), there was
evidence that power was routed in both the systems of the business and the discourses
arising from work related activity. The complexity of the power relationships

encountered was unexpected and unpredictable (Miller & Watson, 2006). It was further exacerbated by confusion in leader identity and in some cases managers projecting their own vulnerabilities and anxieties onto their subordinates. Projection appeared to add a feature of distortion within which anxieties could be nurtured as misconception and distrust heightened in the experience of lived reality.

The management structured interview in June 2002 revealed that notions of control constituted a number of built in contradictions inherent in the system of work and complicated by the emphasis on structural boundaries and hierarchical associations (Chattopadhyay, 1999; Hardy & Clegg, 2006; Sillince, 2006;). Collectively, senior managers accepted imagined boundaries of control established from where they perceived themselves in the hierarchy (Vince, 2002; Weick & Roberts, 1993). The lack of individual and collective awareness of these imaginings supported the development of pervading social defence behaviours which existed at an individual and collective level. Boundaries of control and notions of authority enacted only through the permission of ‘other’, whether imagined or not, ensured that managers could avoid dealing with any unpleasant associations with a lack of personal authority or control (Levinson, 2002).

The importance of trust in the relationships between senior management team members was evidenced by the inability of the team to hold relationships together and allow agreed upon transactions to proceed (Elangivan, Auer-Rizzi & Sabo, 2007). All appeared to have a fairly adept way of avoiding their issues and controlling any resultant anxiety (Stacey, 2003). It was evident that managers were reluctant to
explore these notions with others and had largely failed to recognise the social realities in which they operated (Hardy & Philips, 2004).

The process of collaborative inquiry would allow for the testing of these notions, assumptions and social defence behaviours. The senior management team feedback session in August 2002 allowed for a collective understanding of the lived experiences of others in the organization. Whilst the cooperative process resulted in an improvement in understanding of the causes and manifestations of anxiety, there still permeated a degree of complexity around boundaries of authority, control and power relationships. There was a strong desire for the group to focus on the need for others to change structure and processes, rather than deal with the more emotive and somewhat difficult topic of human feelings and beliefs. Although there was some progress, there was still much work to do to engage with the human processes from which these experiences stemmed.

The intervention was incomplete because I left the company. Two years later the MD confirmed that the managers had reverted to their previous inappropriate behaviours. This indicated that the role of action researcher in maintaining the stimulation to evoke a collaborative process was by necessity a long and on-going commitment.

7.1.3 Case Study Two – TSC: First Order Findings

TSC was struggling with its company identity and knowledge capability. The lack of identity was interpreted by the management team as a reason for poor performance. It was therefore reasonable for management team members to have a certain anxiety about their perceptions and that of the parent company in the US (following Brown &
Humphreys, 2003). This anxiety was exemplified by an initial reluctance to participate in the research. Avoiding addressing those perceptions and deflecting responsibility back to the US parent company meant that managers were able to sustain a good enough holding of their anxiety to perform what they considered to be their roles in the organization (Stacey, 2003).

Identity of management self seemingly linked to a notion of a lack of control. Managers appeared to position themselves in the business as vehicles for the decisions made by the US and were unable to address the reality of their work situations (Kets de Vries, 2004). At least half the team had developed a practice of avoidance of dealing with difficult issues and permitting the erosion of any legitimate power they had by an over reliance on their superiors (Hardy & Clegg, 2006; O'Doherty & Willmott, 2001). Over reliance was coupled with a resource dependency and reluctance to address their concerns regarding knowledge capability. Decision making power was consciously avoided or neglected (Bovey & Hede, 2001).

Leader identity also indicated a disconnection between what the business was stating it was doing and what the leaders of the business communicated (Ligon, Hunter & Mumford, 2008). This rhetoric and reality nexus provoked anxiety in management and in members of the business who then sought relief from the discrepancy by the use of humour and parody. Such outlets of the emotional condition of the larger organization was suppressed by business leaders only to be pushed 'underground' by workers eager to vent their feelings.
Trust issues manifested themselves in the sporadic belief of localised and hierarchical support, containing such notions in the boundaries of site (Schatzki, 2005). A good enough holding of anxiety was evidenced by an avoidance of being held accountable and protecting the boundaries of imagined control (Diamond, Allcorn & Stein, 2004; Simpson, 2001). Managers were reluctant to engage in a collaborative process, wishing to keep the results of the structured interviews as a silent witness to organizational phenomena. The prevailing issue of avoidance of the social realities of their situation was difficult to encounter successfully.

7.1.4 **Case Study Three – PSEC: First Order Findings**

In PSEC, notions of anxiety stemmed from early evidence of an organizational inertia and over reliance on departmental boundaries and functions (Boethius, 1999). There appeared to be a reluctance by managers to address their issues themselves, deflecting ownership onto other areas such as human resources or finance (Erlich-Guinor & Erlich, 1999). There was also evidence of a disconnection with manager identity (Borgelt & Falk, 2007) and the use of emotive language to reinforce leadership strength and capability (Callahan, 2004).

The Management Structured interview revealed that there was reluctance by managers to engage with the transactional nature of work relations (Karreman & Alvesson, 2004) and this reluctance appeared to impact on individual self identity. Focussing on tasks appeared to offer an antidote for any inherent anxiety by offering managers an opportunity to focus on what was comfortable for them to encounter (Jarrett & Kellner, 1996). Trust relations appeared to be marred by a sense of individual
vulnerability to others' hidden agendas and there was evidence of problems with individual and group affiliation (Woolthius, Hillebrand & Nooteboom, 2005).

However, an interesting conundrum was evidenced by the responses to the question on the openness of the team to deal with difficult issues. The team were split with about half stating that difficult issues were addressed openly. This appeared contrary to their notions of trust and mutual support. These aspects inferred that business leaders were not one dimensional characters (Kets de Vries, 2004) and it may be inferred that managers were able to compartmentalise their issues. Such compartmentalisation appeared to affirm a self defence mechanism of avoidance of their real situation (Bion, 1959). Avoidance was also evident in the lack of regular management team meetings and a reluctance to engage in social connections by some.

Notions of anxiety exploration through the availability of a safe harbour to address these issues were mooted (Kets de Vries, 2004) but there was never time made available to explore the results of the structured interview. Such reluctance exemplified the strength of social defence behaviours in the team which avoided addressing the difficult issues that existed. There was evidence that identity with the leader waned, as did the ability of the senior managers to transact collectively the business needs. Rather they tended to rely on small group activities and a reliance on e-mail communication.

Disconnection from and by the leader of the senior management team was evidence of a breakdown of leader identity. Such fracturing caused defence behaviours rooted in confusions with self identity, leader identity and associations with other (Putnam and
Passive resistance or acceptance of leader approaches created inertia within the senior management team unity as managers adopted strong notions of self. Such strong notions evoked a reaction to leader identity by disconnection and the establishment of social defence behaviours that sought to reinforce such behaviours. There was evidence that the leader became an iconic position, rather than the leader of the group itself.

7.1.5 Second Order Findings

The research indicated that the nature of anxiety in senior management teams may be seen as common to the three case studies in five discrete ways. First, there were associations with the role of leader and identity with that leader (Billows, 2004; Endaba, 2008; Ligon et al, 2008; Roberts, 1999). Second, there were notions of environmental safety to permit an honest collective inquiry experience (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001; Fineman, 2003; Vince, 1996, 2002). Third there existed tensions between the current state and the future state, if those anxieties are exposed (Beer et al, 2005; Hoyrup, 2004). Fourth, there was the fear of what politics and power situations create in the minds of individuals, perceived or otherwise (Antonacopoulou, 2006; Clement, 1994; French & Vince, 1999; Hyde & Thomas, 2002; Pettigrew, 1985); Fifth, there were notions of a bounded rationality existing in manager role and structure that pervades businesses today (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Cosner, 2009; Hyde, 2006). The complexities of dealing with these notions for individuals and researchers alike are highlighted in all three studies as the action-researcher endeavours to open the potentially problematic ‘Pandora’s box’ of collective realisation (Backstrom, 2004; Weick & Roberts, 1993).
There was evidence that participants in the studies were experiencing anxiety during heightened periods of business change (Heimer & Vince, 1998; Newman, 2000; Schein, 1993). This anxiety resulted in a number of social defences against anxiety which created inertia for some, action in others and sub group forming for most (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Bourne & Walker, 2005; Fleming & Sewell, 2003; Kets de Vries, 2007; Putnam & Boys, 2006; Vince, 2006). There were indications that these responses had a resultant impact on organizational change management and had the potential to modify the emotional landscape of the wider organization over time.

In each study, there was evidence of how other employee groups were affected by the behaviours and actions of the managers. Identity with the leader and the reciprocal nature of the leader-follower relationship were critical facets in engaging with the issues emerging from the studies. The relationship was inexorably linked to the creation of a safe environment for these features to be explored.

In the three case study organisations, only the first was able to develop an environment which became safe enough for group reflection and exploration. In the other two organizations, leader identity, neglect of behavioural issues, and a lack of mutual trust resulted in the practice of management withdrawing within their areas of control and responsibility. In PSEC, disengagement resulted in removal of the management meetings which provided the only forum for full team engagement.

Withdrawal meant that managers in two of the case study organisations were willing to engage in their responses to the structured interviews, but were reluctant to deal with the outcome of their responses. In case study two, managers themselves were
reluctant to participate collectively in feedback post structured interview due to somewhat irrational fears of reprisal from the USA parent. Despite reassurances to the contrary, there was a belief in this group that others would inform the USA parent of the experience and it would be received negatively. The fantasies of imagined boundaries of experience were both pervasive and represented a unique social defence behaviour which was collectively shared.

In case study three, managers were prepared for the feedback session, welcoming the opportunity for collective examination of the organization. Clearly, a few had their own agenda in understanding how Paul would respond to the themes emerging. Paul portrayed enthusiasm for the session, committing to time at the next management meeting for review. The review never materialised and despite numerous reminders, together with his assurances that the session would be done soon, the session was avoided. This indicated that if the leader of the work group has their own anxieties, the resultant self defence mechanisms have more consequence for the rest of the group.

Exploring the notions of anxiety in an organizational context was a painful process. The awakening of a deeper realisation of anxiety inherent within individuals through questioning and reflection created tensions that had to be managed carefully. The tensions that exist between a realisation of the current state and a fear of the loss of what was known in the learning experience conjure social defence behaviours that must be recognised, collectively assimilated and explored. In case study one such realisation took a number of years to create the trust and environmental safety necessary to commence the exploration of these notions.
Power and politics were consistent themes in the studies, with individuals struggling at times with notions of control, individual authority and the acceptance of transactions arising from those above or on a par to them in the hierarchy. Such transactions revealed concerns with role erosions, threats of destabilisation or understanding of the boundaries of power between participants. Such concerns were indicative of a bounded rationality (Reed, 2007; Simon 1945) still in existence in the organizational construct, whereby individuals feared what existed beyond that perception of reality. Politics, power, culture and anxiety management sat outside of these perceptions.

Case study two shared similar themes of the causes of anxiety but time and climate were not ripe for collective enquiry. Indeed, I was confronted as action researcher with the emergent risks stemming from an inquiry of this nature; the risks of raising the issues and finding oneself caught in confusion over role identity, issues of loyalty, behavioural associations, and fear of altering the status quo (following Coghlan, 2001). Explorations of anxiety as action researcher created additional anxieties in self and participants. The role of researcher was not a passive position.

In tandem with case study one, however, case study two identified similar issues with identity with leader; issue avoidance; notions of power, politics and authority to act; trust and mistrust; resistance through humour, cynicism and passivity; and role identity. Distinct in this study was the notion that environmental safety and trust can extend beyond the barriers of locality, and across boundaries of time and place. The aspects of safety in connection with exploring the causes of anxiety as a group were much to do with perceived risks from the US of pursuing an open discussion. There
was somewhat of a ‘Big Brother’ mentality that somehow their actions would be discovered and this mentality had negative associations. The connection with the parent company as a powerful influence on the action and inaction in the case of managers sitting some six thousand miles away was unexpected but consequential of an environment that had evolved though strong identity with off shore management. Extending the boundaries of control beyond local time and place was not considered in the methodological framework of these studies and may offer further points for discussion in the Recommendations for Future Research section of this thesis.

Case study three shared themes with the previous two cases and in time line was similar to case study one. However, the desire and interest in exploring the issues collectively waned and wandered. There appeared to be a genuine desire to explore and control the associations stimulated by the management structured interview, but this was hindered by the one individual with overall business control. In addition, without the appropriate environmental conditions to create the requisite safety, time and situation for exploration, the feedback did not arise.

Identity with leader was a powerful indicator in this study, driving associations and environmental factors of safety and control. Responses connected to Bion’s (1959) fight or flight responses to anxiety were resonant in the research, together with confusions around notions of leadership and role. Bion’s work was also useful to examine notions of containment of anxiety as the systems and processes enacting within the system served to provide the safety of containment as managers focussed their attention on activities within their perception of bounded rationality.
There was evidence that participants did achieve a heightened understanding of the issues confronting them in a period of change and of the need for new approaches to the business. New approaches necessitated a learning experience that was founded within individual, teams and organizations. Success of that learning experience was seen to depend on the openness of the individual, the work group and the key influencer in that group to those experiences. There was a mixed response to this need as the participants in two of the case studies failed to engage in a collective learning experience.

7.2 Interconnections Cross Case Studies

Each case study was undertaken in its own context and environmental conditions. The only similarities between cases were that the three organizations were owned by USA parent companies and had similar financial turnover. There were no associations in terms of structure, management team size, management team experience, number of employees or span of control. Each case study was confronting a distinct commercial situation and unique need for change.

The results of the studies indicated that these businesses were still reluctant to engage with the human processes that exist within organizations. Despite many associations with people being the greatest resource in business, there still remained a difficulty in acknowledging the need to engage with emotional processes which, these studies reveal, have an impact on organizational responses to change. Senior management teams in particular, which embody the controlling interests of modern business, had difficulty in addressing their emotional issues, preferring to adopt a systems based approach to the condition of change. The reluctance resonated with the complexity of
these issues as highlighted by Backstrom (2004) and may indicate a breakdown in social connections.

Cross case study analysis revealed that anxiety was triggered as a consequence of situational factors which in turn dictated a set of defences against anxiety that permeated the individual, group and organizational context. Failures to address these issues were shown to have implications for the individual, the group and the organization. Anxiety was created by, and was a symptom of, a number of organizational factors. These factors have been shown to be consequential of a number of interconnecting socially constructed organizational processes (Backstrom, 2004; Clarke et al, 2009).

There was compelling evidence across cases that failure to address individual understanding of role, authority, span of control and hierarchical presence create levels of anxiety which the individual largely suppressed. Relationships with others impacted on self identity, particularly relationships with superiors and peer colleagues (Foucault, 1972; Ybema et al, 2009). Collegial working conditions were only possible where triggers of anxiety were addressed in an environment of mutual trust and exchange. Creating a safe harbour for the exploration of these aspects had the potential for the reduction in anxiety as assumptions were tested and alternative scenarios were presented.

Limits to individual understanding of ‘self’ and ‘other’ were contained in organizational frameworks which were largely reluctant to explore the difficult and the unusual. Examining causation of individual anxiety and their respondent defence
mechanisms may proffer useful opportunities for the management of change in a mutually inclusive way. Addressing the causes of anxiety individually and intra-group extend the boundaries of imagined control beyond the ‘self’, allowing perceptions to be understood and evaluated [Hoyrup, 2004].

It is suggested that the evidence accumulated in the process of discovery through these studies supports an approach which seeks to understand these largely unconscious and sometimes subversive reactions to the effects of anxiety. Organizations have the potential to create different patterns of behaviour and proffer alternative scenarios, particularly at heightened periods of change.

7.3 Methodological Issues Arising from the Studies

In previous studies, notions of time have been largely absent from the conceptualisation and methodological frameworks applied to research of this nature. Time was seen to be an external force controlling the ability to gather and capture data in live situations, and to explore phenomena when the situation was changing shape. It was recognised that time may constrain the research process and cause additional anxiety in the researcher to press for results. Time as a notion of emergent anxiety also needed to be engaged with, understood and planned for, as part of the research design.

Many action researchers confront issues regarding the compilation of qualitative data, its storage and its retrieval. The wealth of data available in this type of research process created additional difficulties in the approach to capturing the data, storing it, retrieving it, and analysing it with cognizance. Such difficulties were compounded.
when combined with a struggle with codification and how I should code power and politics for example, without causing additional confusion in interpretation and analysis. Interpretation was centred in the paradigm of collective inquiry, assuming that there would be desire, stimulus and environmental conditions supporting such exchange. This was not guaranteed and was also testimony to the difficulties of drawing out causes of anxiety in environments not predisposed to exploration of this nature.

Notions of trust of the researcher and the availability of a safe environment for the exploration of the causes of anxiety were difficult to engender. Social defences against anxiety were found to be more pervading than I had imagined. There were inherent difficulties in creating group transaction in a climate of distrust and fear. The anxiety of individuals, and the resultant defences against that anxiety penetrated the group, the organization and the research project. It was felt this outcome was a consequence of researching the action, in the action of doing. Moments of individual and group exploration and reflection supported the elucidation of concepts and interpretations but these needed to be planned for and developed as part of the action.

There was a methodological risk that as action researcher I would pair with those group members who offered a similar interpretation to my own. Keeping a research journal helped focus interpretations and reflections about events as they arose, creating opportunity for re-appraisal and reconsideration as part of the recycling provisions within my data analysis model. Maintaining a consciousness of active investigation through confronting positive and negative interpretations from self was necessary and critical to the ethical integrity of the research.
Social defences also resulted in action researcher issues of identity, of role, of receptivity, and on occasion, transference of others feelings of doubt or fear. Positioning oneself to explore the issues stemming from individuals created a struggle in some for containment of that anxiety, which culminated in some cases in a criticism of, or disconnection with, the research itself. Issues of researcher identity frequently arose as my role changed shape from a guide through the process, to inquisitor, ally, counsellor, mother, coach and human resources practitioner. These identities were unconsciously shaped by the process of investigation and not accounted for during the methodological design. A researcher’s immersion in the process does not always build the rapport and trust necessary to unveil associations and connections with anxiety issues. This was not least because of the identity of hierarchical role and the connectivity with the business leader.

The portrayal of participant ‘voice’ was also a feature requiring significant conscious management. To portray quotations ethically and accurately, without colouring them with my own perceptions, was seen to be essential. Those who declined to participate also needed to be heard but in a way that did not expose them to further anxiety or break researcher-participant relations. Maintaining confidentiality, but retaining a basis of context and connectivity, required conscious effort and distancing. It was important to contain natural bias and sympathy projected inwardly, with an outward projection of distance and ethical inquiry. These struggles were seen to be unique to action research and longitudinal studies where participant relationships were forged and shaped through interaction and time.
The tenuous association between role identity and researcher identity needed to be consciously managed. The risk of being seen as a pushy maverick, co-joined with the need for controlled evolution and active participation built over time, was envisaged as acting negatively on trust and mutuality. Such an outcome could have the risk of delimiting the research outcomes if the processes applied were hurried in order for research to be done within time limits. There was a risk associated with the speed of jumping to conclusions without suitable exploration, trustworthiness of the research process, rigour and cognizance.

During a number of phases in the research such as through the literature review, through data compilation and analysis, and through the review of the interconnectivities of the three case studies context, similarities and differences, I discovered that my understanding was incomplete. The chosen methodology did not always provide me with a clear guideline to achieve an insightful and rational process of investigation. I developed a number of models to aid this process, which may prove to be useful for other researchers working within similar subject areas in a qualitative paradigm. One mind map and three models emerged.

7.4 Emergent Concepts and Models

The concepts and models described in the sections which follow have been inductively developed during the process of research and investigation for this study. They have been developed to answer certain considerations and give guidance as to the what, the how and the why of such research investigations. An outcome of those considerations was to clarify my own thinking and interpretations regarding the nature
and impact of anxiety on work groups and the effects of anxiety on learning at an individual, group and organizational level of analysis.

These outcomes were supplemented by a goal to bring the research findings together in a way that showed the further implications for practice for individuals and organizations undergoing significant change and learning situations. They were also purposeful in providing further templates for investigation in future research of this nature.

The Mind Mapping Anxiety Causation in Management Teams diagram introduced in part 2 of this thesis (figure 2.1, page 18), was informed by my reading on the subject of anxiety in work teams. I wanted to capture the potential causes, experiences, manifestations and outcomes of anxiety in order to guide my appreciation of the subject matter. This supported the development of a structured interview that may offer more insight into causation and potential areas for learning.

Many authors have written on the theme of anxiety (Barauch & Lambert, 2007; Bion, 1961; Briner, 1999; Cardona, 1995; Jacques, 1955; Kets de Vries, 2004; Vince & Martin, 1993) from psycho-analytical, social systems and group relations considerations. Others believe anxiety can be designed out by the creation of boundaries of structure and role (Jacques, 1989; Miller, 1999), although they do give recognition that anxiety could still be present in the relations between others. Fineman (2007) recognised that more research needed to be encountered in order to shed light on how the changing shape of organizations today impacted on emotions at work in a way that unhinges emotion from the ‘constraints of instrumentation’. Thus, few social
science researchers today deny that working in complex organizations impacts on individuals' feelings. Thus, there appears to have been a shift away from the concept of management as rational and controlled. It is proposed that this mind map may offer avenues for exploration in further research into the causes and outcomes of anxiety in the workplace.

7.4.1 Identification of the Point of Optimal Learning

In the model herein developed, and presented in Figure 2.5 earlier, I considered that in order for individuals to position themselves to confront behaviours which have the potential to inhibit individual learning, I needed to ascertain which method or methods allow for the confrontation of these issues, without destabilising the organisation in which the system of managing exists. If, as Kets de Vries (2004) states, managers are not as rational as we would like to imagine, then that argument invokes a response which dovetails the emotional and rational in an harmonious unity, neither one dominating, but each one informing the other. Developed for the purpose of this study, it was suggested that there existed a point when managers were receptive and responsive to new ideas, when optimal learning may occur.

Conceptually, therefore, it may be argued that managers learn best when rational concepts, apropos the scientific or economic models, link with emotional or human interfaces whereby emotional responses like anxiety are dealt with as a process of knowing oneself better (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001; Armstrong, 2000; French and Vince, 1999; Hendry, 2006; Kets de Vries, 2004; Mangham, 1998; Watson, 2001). Thus it was proposed, and designed for the purpose of this study, that there
existed an optimal point of learning when rational and emotional were kept in balance, through identification, reflection, exploration and examination.

Development of the earlier model was supplemented after the completion of the thesis to include environmental safety considerations (figure 7.2 below).

**Figure 7.2 Identification of the Point of Optimal Learning and Environmental Safety**

The 'Point of Optimal Learning' exists when Rational and Emotional intersect in balance.

*Source: Developed for the purpose of this thesis.*

The addition of environmental safety considerations became self evident as the case studies evolved and was consistent with Kets de Vries (2004) considerations. Safety, in this sense, was seen to be the presence of an environment that allows for the release of contained emotion without fear or risk of negative consequences. The
environmental conditions need to offer the participants a plausible security that they can achieve the Point of Optimal Learning through the intersection of rational and emotional, where emotional in these cases was not ascended because of anxiety. Environmental safety was linked to leader identity and the trust that existed between individual group members. In previous studies, these distinctions between individual emotion because of the nature of work and those experienced as a consequence of the inter-relationships between work members was seen to be less than clear (Briner, 1999). It may be proposed, therefore, that optimal learning situations can be arrived at when both rational and emotional are kept in balance.

This model presents itself as an area for further research in understanding the link between emotional and rational concepts, and the environmental conditions that support them; and in exploring the learning environment itself. Emotional issues are not distinct from work practices; they are integral to them and evoke a sense of understanding through emotion. Within the practice of management and thus developing learning approaches which are sensitive to these insights, it is suggested that there may be scope for the gathering of new knowledge and experience in these areas.

7.4.2 Data Analysis Model

As I worked through the analytical phase of the research, I discovered that I needed to evolve a methodology that would enable me to understand the forces of social phenomena that create the reality of the situations in which we find ourselves (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Building on the ideas and concepts of a number of schools of thought (Denzin, 1989; Dey, 1983; Wolcott, 1994; Sheehan, 2000; Yin, 1994), I
sought to develop a model that was suitable to the multiple sources of data and the interactions envisaged as part of the reflective processes, both individually and collectively. The goal here was to interweave perspectives, through the lens of participatory action research, and reflect upon each point in the process. A full description of the approach is contained in chapter 6 above which may prove useful to other researchers working within a qualitative paradigm.

7.4.3 Data Triangulation – A Three Case Study Approach

This model was introduced and explained in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.1, p. 127) above to expand on the general usage of data triangulation in qualitative research. Triangulation has been considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning and verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation (Stake, 2005). In qualitative research, the researcher has been deemed to be interested in the differences or similarities in perceptions from a variety of sources both intra-case and inter-case, and across other cases to establish the thematic resonances in the course of research. That is to say that the significance of the research in terms of the rigour of interpretation and replication is testimony to the trustworthiness of outcomes.

The earlier model needed to be expanded to offer a summary of the triangulation technique proffered. Figure 7.1 (p. 237) expands the earlier concept to provide a working document of how anxiety manifested itself within each case study and the inter-connections with other cases examined. In this way, it was easier to define the First Order and Second Order findings of the research herein reported and offered a road map in order to establish a chain of evidence and linkage.
7.5 Summary

These models have the potential to heighten awareness and understanding of anxiety in senior management teams. Heightened awareness has the potential to evoke a deeper exploration of the subject, further enhanced by the data analysis and triangulation models introduced herein. The Point of Optimal Learning offers researchers a new framework for understanding of the intersection of emotional and rationale processes. It is suggested that these models may therefore represent a significant contribution to the topic of the research, to research methodology, and to approaches in qualitative enquiry.
CHAPTER EIGHT Conclusions to the Research

8.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together the findings of the three case studies in relation to the research questions. The studies indicate, after triangulation, that there are seen to be some similarities of manager experience in each of the cases examined. It will be restated that each case study organization was confronted with a heightened period of change and that these changes had impacted upon the participants emotionally. It will be argued that learning processes became hampered as social defences were adopted which enabled the impact of the more negative emotional reactions to change to be overlooked. The thesis concludes with discussion on addressing the gaps in the literature, implications for practice, limitations of the research, and recommendations for future research.

8.1 Similarities of manager experience

The outcome of such social defence mechanisms impacted organizational effectiveness in many ways. In two of the cases, TSC and PSEC, managers failed to achieve the trust and environment necessary for a significant exploration of these issues. Even in the case where the managers did achieve progress in this regard, there was a difficult period as individuals and groups disconnected and reconnected with organizational frameworks. Time was required to build confidence and trust within the system of work.

Evidence indicated that the experiences of the managers were being felt throughout the three studies. Crises of stability, identity, effectiveness and unity were all evident...
in the cases examined. The impact on senior management team cohesiveness and its inability to respond collectively to organization challenges resulted in poor perceptions below the senior management level. These perceptions resulted in covert issues existing within each organization including rumouring, cynicism, a loss of goodwill, and distrust of company objectives and manager values.

The impact on learning and change at all levels within the case study organisations was not fully tested in all three cases. All cases did, however, highlight the defence mechanisms apparent when anxiety was prevalent and when the conditions to explore that anxiety were not realisable. The impact on individual and group learning processes was one of freezing what was known due to the difficulty of bringing to the fore that which they would rather not know (Bain, 1999) or with which they did not feel empowered to deal. Unfreezing this impact required trust, time and an environment which fostered anxiety release and exploration.

8.2 Learning processes

Learning processes in the cases which avoided dealing with these issues became one of social defences against those emotions. Learning, in those cases that ceased to deal with the inherent anxieties, centred on reinforcing the concentric boundaries that kept them secure and confident. Pairing with others who were like minded, focussing on aspects of work which fulfilled their self image, and regaining control, meant that many of the participants could avoid dealing with those issues that enveloped their emotional reactions. Responses to anxiety become tied up with their authority over others, the way they managed their responsibilities, and their connections with others.
The difficulty here was that it could result in inhibiting the learning processes for others as well as self.

Group learning processes beyond the senior management team were influenced by the ongoing behaviour of managers. In two cases, the senior management team created additional barriers for learning by the way they conducted themselves in the system of work. Employees indicated issues with restrictive guidelines, removal of discretion to act, or a lack of information and direction. Learning became centred on repeating what was already known and reinforcing the containment of that learning experience in the system of work. In these cases the environmental conditions necessary to support the unlearning of conditioned responses were not prevalent.

The first case indicated a problem with sustainability of collective inquiry. The members of the management group had a long established predilection for social defence behaviours. There was good progress in awakening their sensitivity to, and their responses against, those behaviours through the inquiry and the role of researcher appeared to be significant to that process. Once I had left the business, new change created new feelings of anxiety, which stimulated a restoration of what had been previously known and comforting. Members returned to the practice of containing the anxiety within the structure of the business and social defences resulted. Without embedding practice over time, new behaviours were not sustainable when confronted by new threats and challenges to individual, group and organizational stability.
One case, MDC, showed that reflective experiences and learning through exploration of the causes of anxiety supported personal, group and organizational growth. By 'unfreezing' the predilection for sustaining the status quo, the group were able to encounter their causes of anxiety, explore them collectively and agree joint actions for improvement. The journey towards this goal started the process of trust building and boundary clarification and had consequences for the learning experiences of others throughout the organization. There was evidence that the organization was more stable during the process of discovery and there was verification of affiliations penetrating the organizational hierarchy towards effective business performance outcomes.

Despite the journey floundering in PSEC and TSC, the experiences within those businesses clarified my understanding of the causes and impact of anxiety in work groups, and gave me new unexpected insights. Case study three, PSEC, continues its journey of exploration and I am confident that a new phase of learning will follow by the development of the environmental conditions necessary for the collective exploration of the themes identified. My journey with my co-participants in case study three continues.

8.3 Addressing the Literature Review Gaps

In terms of the gaps identified in the literature review, the studies confirmed that notions of anxiety involve a highly complex system of responses to emerging situations. The defence mechanisms highlighted in this thesis indicate that these are powerful forces to ensure that there exists a good enough holding of anxiety by promulgating the stability of organizational systems and processes. There was
evidence that such stabilising assists individuals and groups to cover their emotional condition.

The emotional condition of senior management teams was shown to be a difficult phenomenon with which to engage fully. Addressing this condition would mean the creation of a safe environment in which to explore the emotions and interconnections with others. A mutual spirit of collaboration and openness was required, but for two case study organizations such spirit was difficult to establish. Case study one revealed that even when collaboration and openness occurred, and progress had been made, the dominance of such social defence mechanisms often took advantage of any inertia created by a lack of ongoing stimulus in developing collective and individual reflective practices. Thus, there was evidence that senior management teams reverted to their previous heuristic, and therefore internally dictated responses to organizational requirements. Engaging with collective processes required energy, commitment and sustainability.

It was conceptualised that change represented the transformation of organizational activities and was thus a learning process. It was considered that an organizational wide conversation would connect learning to the day to day activities of the business. In all cases, there was a limit to testing this notion. As there was limited uptake in engaging with a collective process, the potential for reflective learning to impact organizational life was not examined fully. This limitation also impacted the ability of managers to engage with the Point of Optimal Learning as social defences inhibited the potential for lasting collaborative enquiry and performative reflexivity in the here and now of lived experience. There was compelling evidence in all three cases that
managers tended not to engage with their real situation, preferring to adopt their established social defence rituals to protect against any negative feelings.

8.4 Implications for Practice

In this section, I will explore the implications for practice as drawn from the research findings. First, the implications for organizations are stated within a context of business change and environmental uncertainty. Second, the implications for individual practitioners within a framework of action research are considered.

8.4.1 Implications for Organizations

Whilst the purpose of the research study was to understand the notions and impact of anxiety on senior management teams, and to understand the impact of anxiety on learning and change at a management, group and organizational level of analysis, it was also recognised that it had implications on the way change processes are facilitated towards learning outcomes. Thus, the outcomes proffered information which may assist organizations to understand, connect and explore the context and associations which create anxiety in managers and others. The outcomes challenge the notion that organizations and their managers are rational, emotionally detached beings.

In order to create environments that enable the security which individuals need to enter into the collective exchange of emotional experience, organizations may need to consider their businesses in the context of social processes. Organizations are constructed of individuals interconnected within the process of work. The strength of those interconnections is based on identities and affiliations forged by context and
relationship. Consideration of the thinking processes that evolve a more reflective style permits the recycling of ideas and concepts towards the assimilation of ideas for business development. As individuals learn, teams have the potential to become more spontaneous as boundaries of imagined rationality are questioned, exchanged and understood. Such learning outcomes suggest methods of working and leveraging the wholeness of the component parts, allowing the system of organizing to evolve concurrent with business change and the external forces shaping the internal realities.

Understanding the social context in which learning takes place is also significant in evolving the optimal context for learning experiences. If businesses can create societies of practice which emerge to nurture the climate necessary to coach others, learning has the potential to evolve through the hierarchy exponentially. Business leaders may be able to adapt a new set of skills to encourage experiential and reflexive learning practices, creating a safe environment for exploration and insight. Insight extends beyond the individual, towards a collective understanding of what needs to be done.

Leaders of organizations may need to consider changing the phraseology commonly used in businesses today which are believed to inspire others towards business outcomes. Organizations often use phrases such as ‘operational excellence’, ‘best in class practices’ and ‘world class performance’. These aspects often become institutionalised in the commonality of usage and cease to have meaning or to evoke understanding when they are used. The response to these ‘motivational memoranda’ seems to be cynicism, discrete disregard, and an artifice of support as senior managers
adopt the language of the corporation. Knowledge management in these organizations frequently becomes the private holding of key stakeholders in the business.

Breaking the chains of organizational propaganda and promoting the emergence of meaningful and informative data will encourage the exploration of emergent strategies of interest. Overcoming the anxieties inherent in confronting the fears associated with examining the response to such initiatives will involve the conscious creation of learning contexts. Continuous learning should be embedded within the organizational framework to hinder the natural inclination to replace new learning with old practices that restore safety by protecting existing social defence mechanisms.

Managers may need to recognise that emotional consequences are an inevitable outcome of the pressures of heightened change and increasing business expectations. To fear the implications of those expectations is a natural and human response to these prevailing conditions. Managers ought to consider the evolution of a consensual understanding of the mutuality of the society represented by organizations, allowing them the opportunity to share their individual struggle to learn from experience in a collegial way. Sharing experience permits the joint exploration and the development of new insights into human and organizational practice.

Notions of trust and trustworthiness have the potential to be considered in the development of business leaders, extending beyond the rational, pushing the boundaries of perceived control and the notions of management in control. Control is of course necessary to business survival. Without control there would be eclectic decision making, creating chaos and confusion. Control in this case centres on the
openness of dialogue through collective enquiry and experience to unfold barriers to progress for business evolution. Clarity of boundaries of control rest within the framework of the organization design but the framework ought to have enough flexibility to allow the free flow of ideas. That in itself, is a concept that many business leaders may fear.

8.4.2 Implications for Individual Practitioners

The practices and experiences highlighted in this thesis offer additional insights into the role and responsibilities of action-researcher. The methodological framework should be flexible enough to embrace the unforeseen and the unusual. Allowing for regular periods of individual reflection, captured by research journal or practitioner notes, is a useful method of capturing data but also of capturing thoughts and processes revealed in the process of thinking in action. Practitioner action-researchers working within organizations, in partnership with their peers, could ensure that they create checks and balances in the interpretations of the realities they experience. The Data Analysis Model, Figure 5.1 (p.136), and Triangulation of Three Case Studies, Figure 7.1 (p.242), may assist future researchers in data interpretation and analysis.

The experience is as real for the practitioner as it is for the participants and there is a risk that bias and collusion with others will colour the interpretation of events. Research cycling and clarification through teams or others are designed into the data analysis model presented for the purpose of this thesis in order to assist the trustworthiness of opinions and views.
The voice of 'other' in report writing offers the opportunity to be reflected honestly and with integrity. Ethical considerations encountered as part of the studies delineates that alternative opinions and views must be expressed in order to provide a factual representation of the events occurring. Filtering data is both unethical and disrespectful of the participant-researcher relationship. Case study research has the potential for veiled bias, consciously or subconsciously. Using triangulation methods to compare data points and sources, as well as cross-case review, may help to ensure that interpretations are grounded in honest representation. The models presented herein for data analysis and triangulation may proffer additional avenues for research practice.

There is no denying that uncovering the causes and associations of anxiety may create more instability and heightened anxiety. Practitioners may have to steer a path which ensures that individuals can learn from these struggles with experience. Practitioners will need to manage the shift between the struggle to learn from experience and the development of new insights and know-how. Such a shift requires adept handling and interpretation.

Action researchers may need to be aware of the potential personal risks associated with research in this area. Role identity as part of the hierarchical structure can be confused by role as researcher, guide, mentor, and in some cases, counsellor. There are occasions in the research when this blurring of identity adds anxiety to the researcher and, on at least one occasion, causes transference of anxieties in others as identity becomes confused with aspirations of power. Anxiety has the potential to hinder the research process as researchers become distracted with notions of self,
instead of notions of ‘other’. As human beings, combining both rational and emotional thoughts, the nature of this type of research stimulates strong emotions within the researcher in the ‘here and now’. This has to be carefully managed through reflection, insight and action.

Individual researchers may find that the ideas reflected in the model of the ‘Point of Optimal Learning’ offer further opportunity for research. These notions informed the study but were not fully explored and examined. The intersection between rational and emotional exists largely in unconscious processes. These processes are, in part, explored through the examination of the nature and impact of anxiety, but would benefit further from a psychodynamic approach to learning through maintaining a balance between these two constructs.

Individual practitioners have the potential to evolve a deeper understanding of the social processes that impact on the emotional conditions of others, and self. Developing a collaborative approach enables the effective management of turbulence, emotional or otherwise, towards successful multi-level learning experiences and outcomes.

8.5 Limitations of the Research

The case study organizations reported herein did not all complete the journey towards collaborative inquiry. In two cases the environmental conditions did not provide the emotional safety necessary to steer appropriate and responsible research interventions. Without suitable ‘buy-in’ from the senior management teams, and in particular the leader of those management teams, to engage openly in the exchange of information
and ideas, the research is bounded. Containment issues are a useful precursor to exploration and understanding. Whilst environmental conditions may be helpful in broadening an understanding of the pervasive nature of anxiety in work groups, unfreezing these conditions requires patience, time and gradual erosion. In the second case, I became focused on my own anxiety thus creating self-projected boundaries for research integration.

In developing the structured interview, the pilot phase could have been expanded and the final document sent to other groups in the workplace. Whilst the focus of the research was on the notions and impact of anxiety on the controlling interest of the business, the senior management team, there would have been additional opportunity to understand the impact of these questions on groups reporting to those managers. Future research approaches may therefore consider the benefits of extending structured interviews and analysis into additional work groups within organizational structures.

One methodological issue involved the interpretation of terms in the structured interview. For example, some participants wondered what control meant in terms of span, accountability and responsibility. This questioning of researcher assumptions allowed for a moment of understanding of the strength of the structured interview design. I had cause to consider whether it was necessary to define the terms used or to allow individual interpretation, which may be indicative of cultural experience. The essence of experiential positioning and the gathering of knowledge within the case study approach was, I felt, a testimony to individual experience and interpretation. As it related to the notions of control, I felt that allowing an individual interpretation of
the word ‘control’ would assist in understanding the experiences of the participants, as would the experience of examining the case itself. This approach was supported by Geertz (1983), von Wright (1971), and Stake (2005). Thus, notions of control assisted the acquisition of knowledge and the explorations of a shared understanding in the exploration and information stages of the research.

Time itself created a limitation to explore fully the opportunities for collective inquiry in a deteriorating work group situation. A destabilised institution of work is both a difficult one in which to gain openness and understanding, and a rich source of data on the notions of anxiety in work teams. This research paradox continues to evoke further interest in progressing collaborative learning through experience and reflective practice. The challenge is to help create the conditions necessary for that learning to occur.

A similar methodological limitation was the collation and retention of the variety of data collated during the studies. At times the data became overwhelming, and storage, retrieval and recollection of data became exponentially difficult. Retaining adequate electronic records of data types, authors, titles and summaries will improve data management and retrieval in the moment of thesis writing. Thus, time efficiencies are evoked and understanding sustained throughout the writing process. The human faculty for recalling rich sources of information, both evidentially and in literature, is limited to the physical availability of these materials. Memory fails, but a robust data tracking tool will assist the researcher to regain knowledge through triggering recollection and contextualisation.
The complexity of the research subject meant that there was much that required additional investigation and exploration. The Mind Mapping Anxiety Causation in Management Teams (page 18) is an indication of the complex nature of the human emotional condition. It is also evidence of the limits of research governed by the boundaries of time and place.

8.6 Recommendations for future research

A number of recommendations for future research may be drawn from this study. Research surrounding action-researcher positioning during research into emotions in the workplace offers an opportunity to explore tensions, anxieties and struggles with role identity during action research. Much case study research becomes an outward projection of case context and the voice of 'other'. The voice of 'self' as action-researcher and the struggles to come to terms with what is happening internally, usually take second position to the experience and understanding of group participants. There is scope, therefore, for future development of understanding of the role of action researcher in the action of research.

There would be benefits in researching the impact of collective inquiry over time in organizations. I could not find evidence in the literature reviewed for these studies that research had been undertaken at a point beyond intervention strategies. Time as a concept appears to have been largely ignored in previous studies. The evidence of case study one indicates that processes towards collective inquiry in work teams are only tenuously held. As new pressures emerge on organizations and as the change to respond to those pressures impacts upon individuals, reinforcement of learning
approaches is needed. Further research into the lasting nature of research interventions of this nature would be useful. Such research suggests a longitudinal approach.

Attendance to the difficulties of implementing collective experience in emotionally safe situations would offer more opportunity for research. Notions of trust, emotional connection, identity with leader, and perceptions of power and politics, all help shape the contextual identity of work group members. Whilst there is evidence that a number of studies have explored the interconnections between some of these constructs, there remains the potential to explore the aggregate of these aspects in the context of the workplace itself. Research into these associations and exploration into these aspects would be beneficial.

In today's economy, there is a significant presence of global companies which have grown through merger and acquisition. Many of these have corporate headquarters outside of specific countries undertaking workplace research and this offers additional research potential. In the three case studies reported herein, associations with entities outside of the main research country environment caused new dimensions of anxiety beyond the place of work. Associations, politics, assumptions and power relations across country boundaries, and in some cases due to delays of time, caused emotional reactions in individuals. These consequences, when co-joined with communication strategies which are often reliant on e-mails or phone calls outside of local country working time, offers the potential for research into the consequences of work invading private time.
Although not part of these studies, it was commonplace in all cases for senior managers to deal with e-mail correspondence and telephone calls from the corporate offices into the early hours, as there was an eight hour time difference between sites. Therefore, research into these behavioural aspects could be beneficial for understanding the additional influences on individual anxiety in the workplace caused by associations of being managed by, and reporting to, entities in different time zones and world locations.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the insights and models represented herein offer additional opportunity for research activity. Further research into aspects of the Mind Mapping Anxiety Causation in Management Teams Figure 2.1 (p.16), may offer further potential areas of exploration and interconnections between anxiety manifestations in individuals and work groups. Exploration of the work behaviours that have the potential to cause anxiety beyond the boundaries of the current studies reported herein may offer additional understanding in this area.

Aspects of triple loop learning introduced in chapter two fit the collective mindfulness of the organizational context. Exploration of such learning may offer opportunities to examine the interrelationships between system dynamics and behaviour, particularly when there is an indication of social defences in the work context. The relationship between organizational structure and human behaviour presents as a potentially interesting phenomenon for further examination. Such examination may offer opportunities for expanding the causes of, and responses to, social defence behaviours embedded in organizational frameworks.
If one considers the premise that all organizations are social structures, there is potential for further exploration of the concept of organizations as an amalgam of the interrelations of action (following Weick, 1979). Such understanding may offer a useful alternative perspective to the notions of collective mind in the context of place. Investigations into the psycho-dynamic nature of human interrelations bounded by the condition of work may offer further associations in exploring the nature and impact of anxiety.

Further research into the Point of Optimal Learning (Figure 2.5, p.46) has the potential to support the evolution of modes of learning which will be able to respond to the struggles to learn when emotional or rational constructs dominate. Additional research into this aspect will offer meaningful interpretation and critique of the model presented herein. Psycho-dynamic and scientific models of enquiry may offer further explorations of these notions.

Data triangulation is a much researched area in previous studies. Utilising the models presented in this thesis (Figure 4.1, p. 127 and Figure 7.1, p. 242) may offer plausible alternatives for defining learning outcomes from multiple case inquiries. Triangulation in this case depends on the expansion of datum towards a coherent whole. Cross case study validation stemming from the interrelationships and associations interpreted from disparate cases may be useful. Reference to similar cases reviewed within the data analysis and data triangulations approaches may proffer opportunities for delineating the multifaceted nature of anxiety in work groups.
Contributing to this methodological framework are notions of data analysis and interpretation. The model presented in figure 5.1 (p.136) presents an extension of previous data analysis models by merging a number of schools of thought. The extension may offer additional research scope as other researchers utilise and expand these notions. Researchers may consider the interweaving of viewpoints by applying the extended congruence aspect of the framework.

The research embodied in this thesis reveals that business life today is representative of the frailties of the human condition. Leaders may be able to evoke a more meaningful inter-group and organizational exchange by developing awareness of the causes and impact of anxiety in organizational life. Progressive organizations may be able to evolve a safe harbour in which to develop such understanding and promote the development of collaborative understanding in senior management teams. Such understanding functions best when minds are open to experience (following Kets de Vries, 2004).
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Definition of Terms

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>A source of emotional stress which causes various degrees of psychological disturbance (Jarrett and Kellner 1996)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>The right to make an ultimate decision, and in an organization it refers to the right to make decisions which are binding on others (Obholzer, 1999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>The organizational capability to get the maximum value from resources. (Sillince 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Learning</td>
<td>A combination of learning at individual and group level which impacts an organization’s responsiveness and capability through collective experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>The processes whereby differentiated but interdependent individuals or interest groups use whatever power they can amass to influence goals, criteria, or processes used in organizational decision making to advance their own interests. (Miles, 1980)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Refers to the ability to act upon others or upon organizational structure. (Obholzer, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychodynamics</td>
<td>The description of the energizing or motivating forces resulting from the interconnection between various parts of the individual’s personality or character structure. Inherent</td>
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within this is systems psychodynamics will combines the aforementioned description with a connectivity of a complex organizational whole. (Neumann, 1999)

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<tr>
<th>Reflexivity</th>
<th>the process of critical self-reflection on one’s biases, theoretical pre-dispositions, preferences an acknowledgement of the inquirer’s place in the setting, context and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand and a means for a critical examination of the entire process. (Schwandt, 1997)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Social Defences</td>
<td>A system of largely unconscious relationships in the organization of work and organizational structures, which exist to defend existing characteristics of working practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>A belief in the reliability, truth and ability of another person or party to do or deliver what they have promised (Fineman S 2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Case Study Overviews

Case Study One: the Medical Device Company (MDC)

Overview

The Company was formed in 1979 by two entrepreneurs in the United States. Driven by the needs of the medical community for innovative products, MDC grew from revenues of approximately $2 million in 1979 to more than $4.2 billion in 2002. The Corporation employs approximately 13,500 people worldwide, with approximately 4,000 in Europe. It is arguably one of the leading medical device companies in the world, dedicated to minimally invasive therapies in the area of cardiovascular disease, vascular disease and non-vascular disease. Since its public offering in 1992, the Company has undertaken an aggressive acquisition strategy, merging together a number of businesses that allow it to continue to offer technological solutions. Its growth history has been phenomenal, driven largely through acquisition (11 between 1995 to 2000), as demonstrated in Figure 5.1, Growth of MDC 1979 to 1997.

Growth of MDC 1979 to 1997

The number of acquisitions was concentrated between the years 1995 to 1998. The company was facing the management challenges of dealing with quite diverse micro-
cultures in a corporate environment that seeks to deliver its corporate goals from its value system. The MDC had a mission and values statement, as shown in table 1 below.

**MDC Mission and Value Statement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Company’s mission is to improve the quality of patient care and the productivity of health care delivery through the development and advocacy of less invasive medical devices and procedures. This is accomplished through the continuing refinement of existing products and procedures and the investigation and development of new technologies which can reduce risk, trauma, cost, procedure time, and the need for aftercare.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide our people with a strong understanding of our mission and shared values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To think like our customers and work hard on their behalf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To pay relentless attention to business fundamentals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To bring a commitment to quality and a sense of urgency to everything we do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To rely on one another, to treat each other well and to put the development and motivation of our people at the top of our priority lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To encourage innovation, experimentation and risk-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To recognize bureaucracy as an arch enemy and not allow it to inhibit our good sense of business and creative spirit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value statements appear to favour a behavioural approach to managing the business. However, statements such as 'pay relentless attention to business
fundamentals' encapsulate a sophisticated decision making process and system application within the business. An example exists in the hiring process where the local manager is required to obtain sign off for all new hires from his/her manager, the local Human Resources manager, the European recruitment specialist and then from the Corporate Headquarters in the USA.

Managers are informed that they have full decision making power. The extent of this express power, however, is limited by procedural drivers and ultimate resource control as demonstrated in the aforementioned example. Practices between divisions also differ and as one manager put it ‘Things were much simpler before we merged with you, hiring was local. Why do I need to go through all this process when I can get the position filled. We can always follow the form after the event can’t we?’.

Employees have also indicated restlessness between espoused management values and working practices. An investigation into a sale’s deal struck with a customer that was outside of corporate policies was justified by the individual as an achievement of business targets and the satisfaction of customer needs. It was plausibly argued that individual risk taking met with the values of the corporation and served as a defence against explicit but largely misaligned working processes.

Managers and employees find themselves faced with a paradoxical position between the values of the organization and its working practices. The value principles are useful sources of further research into the concept of control and practice, inasmuch as it can explore the degree of control essential for the optimal response of its employees and allocation of resources. The qualitative study undertaken and reported 321
in chapter Five, explored a number of issues of relevance to these paradoxes. Outside of North America, the Company’s development, manufacturing, marketing and sales are managed by the international divisions of the Company.

Each international division is split into groups which align to their vertical markets and areas of medical specialism, as detailed below.

The **cardiovascular group** is dedicated to treating medical conditions that include cardiovascular, peripheral vascular and neurovascular diseases, cardiac arrhythmias, neurological disorders, neuro and aortic aneurysms and acute myocardial infarction.

The **endosurgery group** includes endoscopy, urology/gynaecology and oncology. Its products are used to help patients with malignant and benign tumours, gastrointestinal cancers, incontinence, abscesses, end stage renal disease, benign prostatic hyperplasia, gallstones and urinary stone disease, as well as uterine fibroids and menorrhagia.

The **neuromodulation group** comprises two specific units: Auditory offers solutions to treat permanent deafness through the use of cochlear implants. Pain management develops devices that use neuro-stimulation to mask chronic pain signals with electrical impulses.

The **cardiac rhythm management group** is committed to treating cardiac arrhythmias, heart failure, sudden cardiac fatality and heart disease.
The UK Division

The UK offices were part of the Company’s European operations and provided sales, marketing and Customer Services activities in both public and private sectors. The UK Company was profitable but was faced with high employee turnover (30%); erosion of gross margin through increased competition and product bundling; new technology innovations; regulatory pressure and inconsistencies of approach between each division. The context of change is best summarised by a SWOT analysis, shown in table 2 below.

SWOT MDC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market position</td>
<td>Staff turnover</td>
<td>Competitor technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Portfolio</td>
<td>Product Pricing</td>
<td>Sustaining internal capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>Internal identity</td>
<td>Staff retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancements</td>
<td>Approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Succession issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash rich</td>
<td>Morale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good infrastructure</td>
<td>Politics within the UK and between UK and corporate offices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manufacturing plant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology advancements e.g. drug eluting stent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future acquisitions - new technology alignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique product bundling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS partnerships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative changes – towards less invasive therapies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Developed for the Purpose of this Thesis

The European operation in general was confronted with a number of business challenges. Over twenty years, merger and acquisition strategies had resulted in the organisation structuring itself in alignment with those product/therapeutic specialisms.
Divisions were the embodiment of the acquired company and tended to maintain the previous company's culture and affiliations, despite being employed by a new company and a new overall identity. The divisions, however, created a number of operational difficulties, largely masked by an outwardly projected alignment to corporate requirements but a tactical adherence to old company values. The UK business in particular was wrestling with this challenge and the Managing Director had become increasingly frustrated by Management Group commitment to action, resulting in poorly implemented or in some cases, avoided, tactical situations. The time for action was clear and the Managing Director wished to confront the situation.

The research study was conducted in the MDC between 1999 and 2002.

**Case Study Two: The Software Company (TSC)**

TSC was founded in 2001 by bringing together five specialist companies. These companies in turn had combined a total of seventeen software companies over the previous decade, many of them start-ups from leading institutes. Previously, it was a wholly owned subsidiary of a biopharmaceutical company for the purpose of developing small molecule therapeutics, established in 1993. The primary foci were on partnered programs and pursuing preclinical and clinical development. Its software business was part of its vision of speeding up the analytical aspects of biopharmaceutical modelling.

The parent company decided to split its two businesses in 2004, drug discovery and software modelling, to focus on their specialisms and to ensure that the businesses met their customer needs. TSC delivers software and service solutions to pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and industrial chemical research organizations. It
specialises in life and materials science modelling and simulations, informatics, nanotechnology and scientific operating platform technology. It employs 550 staff worldwide, with 60% of its employees being PhD qualified scientists. TSC supplies its services to a range of different companies including those in the biotechnology, chemicals, petrochemicals, nanotechnology companies and materials-based industries including automotive, aerospace, electronics, and energy. It also services major pharmaceutical corporations; academic and government laboratories.

TSC was breaking even. In general, employees were not leaving voluntarily but there was a constant redundancy initiative year on year. Product time to market was shortening. Management approaches were reactive and often lacked strategic focus. Top management had high employee turnover, with in one case one Vice President having 17 managers in 10 years. The market was static and facing a reduction in value, rather than opportunity. The European operation was managed from its offices in Cambridge, UK, with sales and support offices in France and Germany. The European operations had moved its UK premises two months prior to the commencement of the study into a bespoke building. The prior premises were still under lease to the Company and it was proving difficult to gain sub-let and contractual release. The new premises were underutilised and at the start of the research study, questions were being raised about return on investment, resulting in pressure on staff to sell more product and deliver new product innovation faster.

TSC's business focussed on a number of markets. They included Consultancy, which offered consultancy services to its client group; Materials Science Modelling Solutions; and Life Science Modelling Solutions. Consultancy was a loss making side.
of the business. Materials and Life Science were attempting to focus on developing more modules in its software solutions to meet market demand. Research and development was taking longer than anticipated with high market expectations and delayed or incomplete product delivery. Questions regarding the current and future profitability of the European business were being asked globally and the company started to look to its management teams to turn the business around.

None of the participants in the Management Group (referred to as the Cambridge Management Group or CMT), apart from the researcher, had experience of management outside of the Company. The monthly management meetings reviewed limited information. Reliance on the parent company in the US was high and very few decisions were made, other than regional tactical decisions, by this group. Not one member had an understanding of the business performance at a European level, having access only to global data, and there was some internal group struggles for a dominant leader.

The business needed to change as the Company was reaching a critical phase in its business evolution. Decisions about the ongoing viability of the Consulting group and the sense of urgency in evolving new software modules in the other divisions required a different management process. Suggestions for improving the profitability of the business were being sought by the US parent company and members of the European group were being consulted about this aim. Members of the CMT were feeling vulnerable and some felt that they were not equipped to deal with additional US scrutiny. A different approach was required. Table 3 represents a SWOT analysis of TSC at the time the research began.
### SWOT TSC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market position</td>
<td>Resource destabilisation</td>
<td>Competitor pricing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Portfolio</td>
<td>through regular redundancies</td>
<td>Sustaining internal capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>Product Pricing</td>
<td>Staff engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Internal identity</td>
<td>Stakeholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash rich</td>
<td>Management maturity</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good infrastructure</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable Staff</td>
<td>Morale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nano technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>Competitor pricing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future acquisitions</td>
<td>Sustaining internal capability</td>
<td>Staff engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consortium</td>
<td>Management maturity</td>
<td>Stakeholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partnerships</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Developed for the Purpose of this Thesis*

### Case Study Three: Professional Sound Equipment Company (PSEC)

Founded in 1973, by two entrepreneurs, PSEC grew rapidly to provide audio mixing consoles to emerging music touring businesses. PSEC designed a mixer for recording and began to build a reputation for great-sounding desks, which is often referred to as the favoured 'British Sound'. The innovative transportable mixing desk, a device used for the purposes of live performances, quickly became popular among the bands and the new PA companies that were forming to rent out sound equipment. From what was then a small company in central London, PSEC expanded and started to diversify. At the start of the research it boasts a range of mixers which are designed for use in live sound, recording, post-production, broadcast, media and disco applications. The Company has a network of 88 distributors selling and supporting its products worldwide.

PSEC was acquired in 1988 and became part of significant US owned corporation with US$ 3 billion turnover. The US Corporation comprises a group of dedicated
manufacturers of audio equipment spanning professional audio, in-car systems, multimedia and hi-fi consumer products. PSEC is part of the Professional Audio Group, with its headquarters in California, USA. The Group manufactures and sells audio equipment such as microphones, amplifiers, loudspeakers, digital processing units and sound systems. PSEC comprises two companies joined together in 2002 both manufacturing mixing desks, based in the UK and Switzerland, with two brand identities.

Major performing artists such as Pink Floyd, Bryan Adams and Texas rely on sound systems that include the PSEC mixing consoles alongside sister company processing units. The Company also has strong links with recording studios and through the Swiss operation, supplies broadcast equipment to stations including BBC Radio, CNN and Radio Denmark. As a world-leader with a huge and diverse range of products, the Company covers many different sectors of the Pro Audio market. The Company operates in a varied and dynamic marketplace, which means it has to be adaptable and ready to respond quickly to new trends, while constantly looking at new ways of doing business.

PSEC is profitable, with access to potentially enormous parent company investment (parent company worth over 8 billion USD with significant cash reserves). The management group was facing a number of challenges which needed a quick response to its evolving business needs and business context. Some of the challenges included an aging employee demographic; market opportunities were significant in digital technology but eroding in analogue (which represented the core of its product portfolio); and skills shortages in new technology areas. Parent company control was
strong and there was pressure from the parent to evolve faster product innovation to meet customer demand in a growing and competitive professional sound market. The need for change was clear. The business context for change is best represented through an analysis of the strategic position of the UK business. The following SWOT analysis shown in table 4 below, summarises the key issues.

**SWOT PSEC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Market position</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Resource capability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product Portfolio and alignment with other Corporate brands Reputation and brand history Innovation - control surfaces Cash rich Good infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
<td>digital complexity R&amp;D speed Missed market opportunity Group integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>Digital technology partnerships Future acquisitions Market demand for digital products Off shore manufacturing</td>
<td>Threats</td>
<td>Competition Yamaha Manufacturing capability Quality Market price erosion in some vertical markets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Developed for the Purpose of this Thesis.*
Appendix Summary

The purpose of this appendix was to summarise in brief the prevailing business conditions of each case study. Such descriptive techniques have the potential to allow the reader of this thesis the opportunity to understand the context of the lived experiences of the case study participants (Davis, 2007). In so doing, the research is placed within the larger context of the organizations studied. This has the potential to increase understanding as it allows for consideration to be given to the interconnection of context, as well as the day to day experience of the participants.
INTerview QUESTIONS
MDC
1. HOW MUCH CONTROL OF WHAT YOU DO, DO YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE?
2. DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR ACTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE ORGANISATION IN THE UK?
2A) WHAT ABOUT IN THE CORPORATE CONTEXT (USA), DO YOU THINK YOUR ACTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?
3. WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR ROLE, WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED?
3a) WHAT ABOUT THE JOB ITSELF, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE?
4. DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW AND DEVELOP IN THE ORGANISATION?
5. DO YOU FEEL THAT THERE EXISTS AN ENVIRONMENT OF MUTUAL SUPPORT BETWEEN MANAGERS?
6. DO YOU THINK THAT DECISION MAKING POWER IS WIDELY SPREAD IN THE ORGANISATION?
7. WOULD YOU SAY THAT MANAGERS ARE NORMALLY OPEN IN THEIR COMMUNICATIONS (i.e. that there are no hidden agendas)
8. DO YOU FEEL THAT DIFFICULT ISSUES ARE ADDRESSED OPENLY?
9. DO YOU FEEL THAT THE MANAGEMENT MEETINGS FULFILL YOUR PERSONAL NEEDS?
10. AS A GROUP OF MANAGERS, DO YOU FEEL THAT WE AVOID CONFLICT?
11. WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE COMPANY CULTURE AS A ‘BLAME’ CULTURE?
12. DO YOU FEEL SATISFIED ABOUT THE WAY YOU ARE MANAGED BY YOUR BOSS?
13. IF YOU COULD CHANGE TWO ASPECTS OF THE COMPANY, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?
14. DO YOU FEEL THAT THERE IS TRUST AND OPENNESS BETWEEN PEOPLE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE COMPANY?
Appendix 4 Management Structured Interview TSC

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

TSC

1. How much control of what you do, do you believe you have?

2. Do you feel your actions make a difference to the organization in the context of:
   a. Europe
   b. USA
   c. Globally

3. What aspect of your role would you like to see improved?

4. Do you feel that you have an opportunity to grow and develop in the organization?

5. Do you believe there exists an environment of mutual support and trust between managers and VPs?
   a) If yes, how does this materialise itself?
   b) If not, why?

6. Do you think decision making power is widely spread in the organisation?

7. Would you say that managers are normally open in their communications (ie there are no hidden agendas).

8. Do you feel that difficult issues are addressed openly?

9. Do you feel that the CMT meetings fulfil your personal needs?

10. As a group of managers do you feel we avoid conflict?

11. Would you describe the company culture as a ‘blame’ culture?

12. Do you feel satisfied about the way you are managed by your boss?

13. If you could change two aspects of the company, what would they be?

14. Do you believe there is trust and openness between people at different levels of the company?
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PSEC

1. HOW MUCH CONTROL OF WHAT YOU DO, DO YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE?

2. DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR ACTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE ORGANISATION IN THE UK?
   
   2a) WHAT ABOUT IN THE CORPORATE CONTEXT (USA), DO YOU THINK YOUR ACTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

3. WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR ROLE, WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED?
   
   3a) WHAT ABOUT THE JOB ITSELF, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE?

4. DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW AND DEVELOP IN THE ORGANISATION?

5. DO YOU FEEL THAT THERE EXISTS AN ENVIRONMENT OF MUTUAL SUPPORT BETWEEN MANAGERS?

6. DO YOU THINK THAT DECISION MAKING POWER IS WIDELY SPREAD IN THE ORGANISATION?

7. WOULD YOU SAY THAT MANAGERS ARE NORMALLY OPEN IN THEIR COMMUNICATIONS (ie that there are no hidden agendas)

8. DO YOU FEEL THAT DIFFICULT ISSUES ARE ADDRESSED OPENLY?

9. DO YOU FEEL THAT THE MANAGEMENT MEETINGS FULFILL YOUR PERSONAL NEEDS?

10. AS A GROUP OF MANAGERS, DO YOU FEEL THAT WE AVOID CONFLICT?

11. WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE TSC CULTURE AS A ‘BLAME’ CULTURE?

12. DO YOU FEEL SATISFIED ABOUT THE WAY YOU ARE MANAGED BY YOUR BOSS?

13. IF YOU COULD CHANGE TWO ASPECTS OF HARMAN PRO, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?

14. DO YOU FEEL THAT THERE IS TRUST AND OPENNESS BETWEEN PEOPLE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE COMPANY?
## Appendix 6 Interview Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant:</th>
<th>Date of Interview:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q1: 
Sub Question

Q2: 
Sub Question

Q3: 
Sub Question

Etc

Closing thoughts, comments

---
MANAGEMENT CAUGHT JUGGLING THEIR BALLS

In light of bonus cutbacks, senior managers are increasingly having to keep two balls in the air and take on part time work in order to 'make ends meet' — says our roving reporter lain R. Slicker

The Bunion has trawled the Internet and found alarming evidence that members of senior management have been forced into finding alternative careers. Some managers are in fact spending a large proportion of their working week in employment outside of Deceleyrs.

"The present downturn in the world economy is having a profound effect upon our senior managers" explained Judy Omi, Personnel Manager for this World.

"Times are hard. They have been forced to take on additional work so that they can pay their pool cleaners." President Joseph M. Mollica, a keen saltwater angler, is now spending a considerable amount of his time as sole owner at the 'Snug Harbor Marine Center'. He is also the Rhode Island

Steve Warde from Marcom was anxious to point out to us that he is not involved in the widespread trend for management moonlighting — "I never have and never will be responsible for the publication of any underground newsletter".

Although having only relatively recently taken control of the Decelrys global Marketing department, Dennis Rossi has pulled off the ultimate market stung and sold his personality rights to a Japanese computer game company. One of his character's specialties is "mental calculation of processing speed of computer programming", a trait for which he is well known within Decelrys. Not satisfied with an alternative career as a computer game character, multi-talented Dennis also teaches courses in

DISCOVERY CHANNEL 3.1.5.7f LAUNCHED
Decelrys introduces TV channel

In light of the monumental success of the recent presidential webcasts, Decelrys has launched a new 24-hour television station, broadcasting around the clock from Decelrys' purpose-built Discovery Studio to Decelrys' employees worldwide.

Televisions showing Decelrys 24 will be installed in each office. UK employees will be able to view the new station on an expensive plasma TV screen installed in reception. In the run up to the full launch of the new station, the TV screens will display the Corporate Overview CD in a continuous loop.

Steve Warde, who is not responsible for publishing The Bunion, described the new TV station as "even better than the official internal employee newsletter, its a perfect opportunity to get the corporate message across to Decelrys employees"

Over the forthcoming months, IT will be installing a specially developed transceiver into the brain of all employees to allow them to receive the broadcasts "24x7x365".

See page 5 for schedule.
Appendix 8 Extracts from CMT Document

Is there still a need for the CMT?

Yes, ... minimally we need to focus for discussing and developing local policy and to which we can refer 'housekeeping' issues.

What exactly should be the role of the CMT?

Managing communication, morale and employee turnover issues in Europe.

A venue for developing and reviewing European policies.

Cost Control
Appendix 9. Extracts from Participant Structured Interviews

M1

Q1  Pretty much a lot. Yes, I think so..........you know my boss, he is fairly easy going he just leaves me to do it – as long as I’m doing the right thing then that’s fine…. I think quite a bit, yes.

Q2  They do at a team level, an Endoscopy Team level, beyond that I don’t feel that they do.

Why?  My actions do make a difference down to a divisional level, but with the UK as a whole yes they do impact the results of the UK.. but beyond anything beyond that. I don’t feel as though my actions are rolled out to any division or to the UK as a whole.

Why?  I don’t know I wish I knew the answer, I feel as though maybe, yes you do a good job for my division but beyond that will it really count in another division. You know, the things we’ve done well in my division, nobody ever questions how we’ve done it and lets take a look at how we can help the rest of the company…….. Uhm….. to make a difference in the rest of the company.

Would you feel comfortable with saying to somebody well we have a good way of doing something. Would you be comfortable saying to another manager, let me show you the way?

Well we try in the Country Round Table but it’s a case that everyone’s a manager in there and oh how could we listen to anyone else and that would be like an admission of weakness, you know off that individual. We are all sales managers in that room and we are all supposed to be experienced managers in that room and doing really good jobs, and how could one person possibly have that much more experience or knowledge or success than the other one. It would be like an admission of weakness to take on board what success another sales manager had said. I hope that makes sense.

Q3  Again, yes on a divisional level. If I look at the countries that I have responsibility for, the actions that I have implemented in each of those countries have seen a difference but have those been carried over to the country as a whole, no.

Again, why do you think this is o?

I don’t know

My impression is that you are seen by your boss as being very successful at what you do, so I am just curious

At a divisional level that is rolled out but above that, I don’t know, may be that other people do not see me in the same light as my boss does, I don’t know….are we looking at a divisional point of view or a cross divisional?

From a Divisional European point of view

That’s a different matter. Yes – my boss takes on board what I’ve done because he’s seen it’s successful and things that I have implemented have been rolled out in other countries and to a certain degree of success.

In the other countries you are dealing with Sales Managers, I am just curious why you feel that I don’t know it may be considered safe to show your actions within your division but not within the UK cross-divisionally?

I don’t know, I have no idea … Again, maybe it is this perception that we are all sales managers and it would be some sort of sign of weakness or maybe it is ‘one-upmanship’ you know, I could not possibly take on board what that person is saying… I don’t know, that is what I sense. I also sense quite a competitive environment in there.
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. HOW MUCH CONTROL OF WHAT YOU DO, DO YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE? Tactically a lot, locally strategically most not all, overall corporate strategically only a little.

2. DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR ACTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE ORGANISATION IN THE UK? Yes, on a large scale. Both profitwise and direction wise.

2A) WHAT ABOUT IN THE CORPORATE CONTEXT (USA), DO YOU THINK YOUR ACTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE? Some but not hugely.

3. WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR ROLE, WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED? Scope of influence on a formal basis; Overall control of the local business unit.

3a) WHAT ABOUT THE JOB ITSELF, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE? Not much, I really enjoy the role. It makes a real difference to our business and to the people who work in it. The reporting structure would be the single largest element for change.

4. DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW AND DEVELOP IN THE ORGANISATION? I only have 1 opportunity in the local business unit; outwith this but internal to the corporation there are opportunities but the pro-USA stance (possibly justified) would limit these opportunities to non-USA-ites.

5. DO YOU FEEL THAT THERE EXISTS AN ENVIRONMENT OF MUTUAL SUPPORT BETWEEN MANAGERS? Within my area of responsibility - yes; within the overall organisation - much less; within the exec team - some very strong supportive alliances but there should be more - there is insufficient mutual respect amongst some of the elements for there to be an environment of mutual support throughout the team. This is largely down to a lack of contribution from some elements.

6. DO YOU THINK THAT DECISION MAKING POWER IS WIDELY SPREAD IN THE ORGANISATION? Not really; some areas are much better at this delegation than others; in some areas it does not exist at all.

7. WOULD YOU SAY THAT MANAGERS ARE NORMALLY OPEN IN THEIR COMMUNICATIONS (ie that there are no hidden agendas) Overall, not really; between some elements there are absolutely no hidden agendas. But amongst others there exist significant hidden agendas.

8. DO YOU FEEL THAT DIFFICULT ISSUES ARE ADDRESSED OPENLY? Not all; there is a reluctance to face up to some issues which are tough to tackle. Again the ability to tackle issues and implement successful solutions is varied; it needs to be strengthened in some areas if we are to succeed as a business and as a team.

9. DO YOU FEEL THAT THE MANAGEMENT MEETINGS FULFILL YOUR PERSONAL NEEDS? They fulfil none of my personal needs. They address some of the issues that I would like resolved, but not all.

10. AS A GROUP OF MANAGERS, DO YOU FEEL THAT WE AVOID CONFLICT? Often yes; this is often due to an inability to address the issue constructively with creative solutions.

11. WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CULTURE AS A 'BLAME' CULTURE? Not really; the lack of respect that some have for others in their professional capacity does however constrain our ability as a unit to succeed.
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

MANAGERS

1. HOW MUCH CONTROL OF WHAT YOU DO, DO YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE?

In relation directly to my role, I have a good amount of control. I need to work with peers and my direct line management in putting plans together and approving them, which is thoroughly appropriate, and in most cases I then have plenty of control over how those plans are implemented. The one area that could be improved is in expense control - I still have to get individual line-item approval for items in the budget over my limit of $2,500. This means that ~ 80% of items go to the next level, which is too high a proportion in my opinion. I believe the limit should be set higher so VPs really look at exceptional items (i.e., more like 20% of total items) and that the focus should be more on better management information against the budget as a whole, so that I am made to account for variances against the overall budget month-by-month. I.e., less micro-management but more accountability for the bigger picture.

The area over which control is much less certain is long-term development and strategy for my team - there is a sense that work that I do may well be wiped out by issues beyond my control (e.g., headcount reductions or, more likely, transfers). I'm doubtful that I would get an appropriate level of input to discussions of such changes. Maybe this is just inevitable in the current business environment.

2. DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR ACTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE ORGANISATION IN THE CONTEXT OF:

2.1 EUROPE - Yes.
2.2 US - Yes.
2.3 GLOBALLY - Yes.

3. WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR ROLE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED?

My role as defined is fine, but there are difficulties in executing it from Cambridge when exec management is so centralized and the bulk of departmental management is also in San Diego. Improvements could include better connection between Cambridge and the exec team (preferably through Cambridge-based involvement in that team) and better integration into the management structure for my department - e.g., drive decisions through regular meetings/con calls of Director-level managers rather than ad hoc meetings of whoever is in San Diego at the time.

Clarity as to what (if anything) the organization expects of me in a wider management role beyond my department and within Cambridge would also be helpful.

4. DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW AND DEVELOP IN THE ORGANISATION?

I believe that I have had an exceptional opportunity to grow and develop with the company, as over 12 years I've moved from being a technical writer in a start-up technology company to directing a team of 14 in a $100m software company. This is something I really value and appreciate. However, I see those opportunities diminishing now, because I have reached something of a ceiling in terms of my specialism and because the chances for broader development seem to be constrained for senior managers not based in San Diego. Although the company has in the past supported my personal training and development well where I have driven this (e.g., funding most of my MBA), I'm not sure such a commitment exists to employees at present and I