… and one man in his time plays many parts
(William Shakespeare, As You Like It, Act 2 Scene 7)

A Psychodynamic Approach to Implementing
Contract Management in a Complex
Organization

A thesis submitted in (partial) fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Professional Doctorate in Organization

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgment has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Stuart Strachan
18 March 2013
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I would particularly like to thank Helen and Stuart, my original and enduring doctoral cohort. It made it easier knowing there were others going through the same pain at the same time.

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Throughout my career, certainly since the mid 1970's, I have been on a quest to make organizations with which I am involved more effective and efficient. This has involved making changes, some subtle, some more akin to a sledge hammer. I have been influenced by a myriad of supervisors, managers, subordinates and associates who have contributed to my knowledge and experience. Some very clearly respected my ideas while others clearly considered me to be somewhat ‘whacky’. Nevertheless I owe all of them a debt of gratitude for sending me on this quest for organizational improvement.

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My father influenced me to question the status quo and achieve the best in the most simple way possible. If it was getting too complicated or expensive it was probably the wrong way!
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Abstract

The world is becoming increasingly focused on an imperative to reduce the cost of providing services. Managers at this cutting edge of practical organizational development are continually trying to identify ways to achieve this aim. This study takes place amongst the support services of a large Australian university which is outsourcing much of its non-core services. It has commenced using people whose principal role is not that of contract management to take up a part time contract management role. This part-time role frequently fails in the longer term with significant financial implications to the organization.

The research uses a systems psychodynamic approach to investigate the roles taken up by a cohort of contract management staff as a major focus. A lesser, but still important focus, were the cohort’s unconscious motivations. These contract managers are only responsible for contract management as a small part of their principal role. The current process of training contract managers is to only provide a range of procedures and guidelines. The training of contract managers is also reviewed as a minor focus within the thesis. When compared with a full-time contract manager, a specialist career contract manager, the part-time contract management role does not appear able to be held over a long period of time. When the role is neglected the financial implications are significant to the organization. Therefore a systems psychodynamic approach provides an understanding of the powerful unconscious group dynamics that may cause the role to be neglected.

The study considers a range of support service contracts that are managed by different contract managers. The contract managers have a wide range of skills and experience. It also looks at the hierarchical continuity of understanding of the contract management role. The researcher was an insider researcher for the first part of the study and an outsider researcher for the remainder. During the outsider period, case study research of other change management activities and consideration of the implications of dissimilar cultures between the client and contractor were undertaken as well as completion of the organizational role analysis. It was expected that a method for implementing the contract management role with contract managers would be trialled. However, when the researcher moved from an insider researcher to an outsider researcher this aim proved impossible to achieve. This appears to result from a loss of authority and the engagement of psychological defenses by the participants. Nevertheless a methodology is described which relies on a comparison between the research and a previous change activity that used a primitive or skeletal form of organizational role analysis.
The research used action research as an umbrella methodology. The data was collected from interviews, case study review, an analysis of cultural 'clash' and an organizational role analysis process. As the research progressed the potential for organizational role analysis to form the key change activity developed. However, the use of power by one participant raised the defenses of other participants and resulted in the process becoming a research method in this instance.

The data was analysed thematically in the case of interviews, by collaborative reflections during the organizational role sessions and by interpreting the meaning of feelings experienced by participants. Particularly one person who reported a 'push-pull' feeling in holding two simultaneous and conflicting roles.

From the data and its analysis a working hypothesis has been developed that considers the interaction of two roles which are required to be held simultaneously. Using work that started in the Grubb Institute London, a role is described as the intersection of a System-in-the-Mind and a Person. The role is given to the person and the person then takes the role depending on the way they conceptualise the role in their mind. When a person takes up a role in a single system, a simple system, there is limited scope for other systems to influence that role if the person does not admit them into the system. However, the research hypothesises that a second system may be taken in two ways: as a system integrated into a single simple system where the role becomes quite functional, or as a complex system and role where the simple roles act as influencers. In this case the simple roles act unconsciously and cause the complex role to collapse. This is then displayed as a contract manager neglecting the contract management role.

The research then used the complex system and role hypothesis as well as a review of functional and dysfunctional culture clash to propose a way forward. This proposal suggests that organizational role analysis is potentially an exceptional tool to achieve conscious and unconscious congruency of a system-in-the-minds of a group of people. It has the capacity to collaboratively identify a suitable organizational system, to identify and understand the similarities and conflicting issues of two organizational cultures and to achieve congruency in the minds of the contract manager, the contractor and the hierarchical structures in both the client and contractor organization, which influence the contract manager.
Preface

There are a myriad of reasons as to why one undertakes study at doctoral level and it is an interesting point to ponder. I first thought about this when I was probably about halfway through my study and I was experiencing conflicts between my study, my work, my family, my life goals and myself. All of these demanded time, none were totally selfless and supportive for the entire duration of my study and all had some demand on me all the time, even when they were being completely selfless, which did tend to happen more frequently than not. I think anyone who has taken on a responsibility for a number of years with a commitment to deliver the result of that responsibility will understand the demands that behaviour exacts on the social system in which the person works lives and plays. So my reflection on this aspect of doctoral study suggested there are three basic reasons for taking up this additional pressure in life.

1. **The altruistic reason**

The aim of doctoral study is clearly stated by the business case put forward for this doctoral programme to RMIT University (2006):

> The Professional Doctorate will provide graduates with high level ‘soft skills’ such as people management, communication skills, foresight and the capacity to work in high change, high complexity work places such as are found in both multi-national and local organisations operating in a global environment. Beyond this is developed in students the capacity to understand organisations as high level complex systems that influence human behaviour in and between groups (not simply in and between individuals). Education for these skills is not well provided in the MBA, DBA sequence. The Karpin report found that Australian managers needed to develop such skills. This is still the case today.

I consider this to be an altruistic reason because it is an ideal. It is a very logical reason for an academic to exist and for many an academic it may well be the only reason that is necessary because it underpins the practicality of why they should study further. For some, a prerequisite of entry into academic ranks is the achievement of a doctorate and if they personally seek the pinnacles of academia my altruistic reason for undertaking the demands of doctoral study may also be their personal reason.

But I come from a practical background that more commonly uses the outcomes from academic research to improve the status quo of application to achieve an objective. In this environment when the objective is achieved the next challenge is either delivered by an employer or it arises from the tasks that have just been completed. Research to ‘just find out’
is a luxury that is rarely available and, more often than not, distained by many practitioners, who measure their success in financial terms, as being wasteful. Even though, in this era of knowledge many organizations need to increase their knowledge to maintain their competitive advantage. So whilst the academic reason for doctoral studies is to me valid, necessary and part of a perfect altruism, it is only a part of the reason a practitioner will undertake the rigour and discipline of this study.

2. The practical reason
Why does a practitioner exist? A practitioner creates something or adds value to a service or a product, generally for an employer. That employer may well be the company of which they are a director but it would appear, at least superficially, that we are all accountable to someone or something else. I am not aware of anyone who is not or does not make themselves accountable to another or another group or a thing.

In being accountable, practitioners generally try to achieve a personal goal. From my cursory observations of other people toiling at professional doctorate studies it seemed they expected their studies to deliver an improvement in their status and/or ability within their system. And therefore a concomitant improvement to the amalgam of financial, intellectual and emotional satisfaction that is them as a person.

In my case I want to improve my practice of influencing change and to extend the period that I may practice until my grey matter starts to fail me. Because my altruistic aim in life is to contribute productively to society until I am mentally unable. Not physically unable because from my practitioner background a physical incapacity is merely an issue to overcome in collaboration with others who are also focussed on the same issue. But with a mental incapacity I must offer myself to others, for them to do with me as they see fit in accordance with society’s rules at the time.

3. The personal reason
Perhaps this is where the real motivation comes from and for me it is very complex. I think there are a myriad of reasons for me to undertake the perils and discipline of rigorous academic study.

There is a need inside me for me to prove myself to others. My adolescent schooldays were far from notable. I found the basic rigour of learning unexciting. But I seemed to always need to demonstrate that I was as good as the other. Perhaps it stemmed from a parental influence that I interpreted as ones purpose in being, is a duty to society to do as well as one can and then a bit more, with whatever intellect one is endowed. Of course this led to striving
for goals, but not revelling in them, rather paying more attention to the failures in an endevour to avoid them in the future.

My father was an influence for another reason. He was a marine engineer who came from a trade background in the Glasgow shipyards, just after the first war. After emigrating to Australia after World War Two he eventually became Chief Engineer of what is now termed the Victorian Health Commission. He had no undergraduate studies in business or engineering - that wasn’t how it was done then. In the 1950’s and ‘60’s he was managing a group of engineers who ranged in age from their mid 20’s to late 40’s. Ages at which everything is demanding, home, work and play. My father saw the benefits of education and to lead by example he returned to night school, matriculating in 1968 at the age of 60. So perhaps another reason is that I am being lead from the front by someone who is long since dead!

Then as I approach the stage of ‘getting older’ I am conscious that I want to contribute to society and whilst many people are happy to serve society with manual work it is my preference to stretch my brain into crevices that perhaps society has not reached before. Perhaps this stems from the ‘real’ education I received in my youth on the Oakleigh-Brighton bus in the back corner with Roger, Greg and a few others who would debate some topic, generally of a scientific nature. With the advent of The Australian newspaper, in the mid 1960’s, Roger would regularly bring a copy. Its left of mainstream focus would fuel debate, providing a parry for the right of mainstream education we got from our independent private school. A place which was a cauldron of future industry leaders, academics, politicians and the odd unionist, socialist rebel and absolute ‘drop kick’ that make up the patina of all educational establishments.

Then my mother contributes to the mixture of reasons because she always wanted me to become a medical doctor. From her career as a nursing ‘sister tutor’ in England, doctors formed the pinnacle of society and that was where she pointed me, but that was not to be as it didn’t capture my imagination. In undertaking this study I hope to be able to deliver her ‘doctor son’ before she heads away from this mortal coil on earth. Again that did not eventuate as she left for greener pastures soon after her 100th birthday in 2011.

Finally, perhaps the trivial, but it is still there! The desire to wear a ‘floppy hat’ for no other reason than I find a mortar board to be a rather ostentatious device and a floppy hat far more in keeping with my endeavours to maintain a low profile, but quietly achieve. The fact that I will probably only ever wear it and the resplendent academic gowns for one evening in my life is immaterial, I will have earned them and worn them and as with most practitioners I will
then be looking for the next set of issues to address. Somewhere that requires analysis and theories to be applied to deliver societies needs efficiently and effectively.

4. **What is my professional interest?**

My career started in a medium sized mechanical services contracting business as a Project Manager/Engineer installing heating and air-conditioning systems to complex buildings such as hospitals and simple buildings like shops and offices. I then moved to a maintenance engineering role in a large regional hospital and whilst I only intended staying for 12 to 18 months, I found myself in the one slot for almost 10 years. During this time I discovered that the comparatively easy management or design tasks involved machinery or materials that obeyed the laws of chemistry or physics but management tasks which involved people were both complex and, to the young me, quite confusing. My training had always been quite technical. Especially when the wider society in which the working environment was situated was heavily unionised and, at least on the surface, inclined towards the left on the political landscape.

During my later career I realised I had to work differently if I was not to be a technocratic expert who only relates to machines but in reality actually had to work with and for people to achieve objectives. Therefore I fortunately developed an interest in changing people’s behaviour. I had discovered the role of a senior manager involves melding people into teams to deliver the best outcomes. That means taking someone who does not know the team, understanding their individual contribution, and blending that with the team to chart a course. This fuses the best practices of both the individual and the team to deliver better outcomes than the team was previously capable. To do that with only the laws of physics and chemistry was difficult. From that technical background, to accommodate social science concepts that are, by their very nature, qualitative, is a giant leap into the unknown.

Having taken this giant leap some years ago and moved from the appeal to the novice that motivational theory will give logical, quantifiable and understandable results in the context that inputs are proportional to outputs. I now find myself engrossed in group relations theory, action research and systems psychodynamics. In this there are more variables to a single person than there are letters in a technician’s alphabet. My study then added Bion’s (1961) notion; that a work group takes on a persona of itself, that it is a reflection of parts of the members driven by their collective anxieties. This caused my professional endeavours as a practitioner to be carefully reviewed in a structured form that is the discipline required by this academic thesis. From this consideration of different theoretical approaches and myriad of complexities I have an expectation that my professional leadership of change to workgroups
will be greatly improved and my contribution to the field of knowledge that practitioners can understand will be worthwhile.

I think it is also helpful for the reader to understand how I have written this thesis and my reasons for adopting such a style. Otherwise someone who is expecting a thesis to be writing impartially in the third person, past tense, with gender neutral language may consider my writing to be inappropriate for an academic argument.

However, social science research is about us, as members of an organization, and this thesis in particular is about how we interact with each other. Even to the extent that my knowing this thesis will be read by both expert and inexpert readers as well as internationally recognized and highly skilled examiners affects the way I tell this story of my journey along a path that has not been travelled before. By writing in the first person I am trying to convey my approach as a human being who is just as replete with values, prejudices and beliefs as any other. This human side to qualitative research is vitally important because whilst every interaction with another human does not necessarily constitute a formal intervention in the tradition of action research, it inevitably influences any future thought or action by both participants.

Aigen (2005, p. 192) writes:

The writing of qualitative research reports has had a profound impact on the nature of scholarly exchange as it challenges many of its traditional conventions. These traditional conventions, once seen as necessary components of scholarly writing, are not recognized as vehicles to reinforce the hegemony of particular world views, ideologies and theoretical frameworks. All research reports utilize particular rhetorical and narrative devices to make their points. What differentiates the authors of qualitative research from quantitative research is not the use of such devices, but the acknowledgement that such devices are being used consciously and deliberately.

My preference is also for the present tense because this research took place in ‘real time’ and I feel the present tense helps to convey the immediacy that participants feel. However, where the event clearly occurred in the past and the writing made more sense to report it this way. I have used the past tense.

I have used gender neutral language wherever the gender is irrelevant to the issue being considered. However, if gender neutral language needs a clumsy construct just to maintain neutrality I use gender specific language. For example if I am describing the conglomerate of humans, rather than referring to it as human kind I will abbreviate this to mankind even though it infers gender specificity. Equally I use gender specific language when it is relevant.
For example if I am describing the response from an informant. When men and women may be both presented with issues differently or use different frames of reference to evaluate the issue I will refer to them by their gender.

Other conventions

Systems
Throughout this thesis I refer both to the 'system' and the 'system-in-the-mind' and to the role-in-the-mind. These are different concepts and need to be viewed separately. It seemed to be clumsy to always be writing 'system-in-the-mind' but for the sake of clarity, I have done so. 'System-in-the-mind' is the mental construct of a system by the person who is viewing it. I use 'system' in the more conventional sense as an organizational system.

Simple and Complex Roles
The ideas of simple and complex roles and systems have been developed very specifically in this thesis. As such they may not reflect common parlance for these terms. In common parlance something simple rarely encompasses anything that is complex. However, in this thesis a simple system or role may, in fact, comprise a very complex mental construct. Similarly, a complex system or role in the context of this thesis may consist of a comparatively simple mental construct. This note is not intended to cause confusion, merely to avoid distraction later when the idea of simple and complex roles and systems is introduced.
Chapter 1 – The purpose of my research

1.1 Introduction - The aims of this project and organization of this thesis

This project explored ways in which the contract management process (of contracts to supply services) within the university environment may be made more efficient and effective. The supply of services usually occurs in a dynamic environment and differs from the supply of goods. Services are intangible products that involve the supply of labour. The quality and effectiveness of the supply is mostly evaluated qualitatively by observing the results sometime after the service has been delivered. The supply of a good is a tangible product that can be physically quantified against a specification for quality, quantity and timeliness of delivery.

The project used an action research method involving staff members working within a procurement environment. The purpose of services procurement is to purchase a solution to a business issue that is either unable or uneconomic to provide from within the organization’s own staff base. For example: recruitment services or specialist technical maintenance services. The following diagram provides an overview of the procurement contract cycle.

![Contract Cycle Overview](image)

**Figure 1.1** The Contract Cycle (Strachan 2006a, p. 2)
I developed this diagram to demonstrate to both future and current contract managers the cyclical nature of the work, the different phases and key activities. It was not based on other literature but reflected the way we practiced contract management at the university. In this diagram the contract cycle is divided into two series of activities – those that occur prior to the award of the contract and those that occur after awarding the contract.

Within the pre-award activities there are two distinct phases. They are the strategic phase and the sourcing phase. During the strategic phase the organizational needs are evaluated and the strategic approach to the delivery of the service is determined. The sourcing phase then identifies the process that will be followed to source the service and also enacts the sourcing process. For example the process that is identified may be a simple public tender process or perhaps a public expression of interest followed by a select tender process. Completion of the sourcing process occurs when contracts or memoranda of understanding are signed between the organization requiring the service and the service provider.

The post award activities consist of a single phase, the management phase. During this phase the service provider is introduced to the organization, the service is delivered, monitored and, usually when the contract period is for twelve or more months, progressively paid for by the organization. At completion of the contract the performance of both the service provider and the design of the contract are reviewed. The service provider review determines if the service provider delivered the requirements that were specified in the contract. The design of the contract review determines if the service specified was actually what the organization required. These reviews then provide part of the base information for the strategic phase as the contract moves into its next cycle.

**Project Intentions**

The project intends to:

1. Explore the gap between identifying and buying the solution and deriving the benefits. That is, in the above diagram, the project will focus on the steps ‘implement the contract’ and ‘manage the contract’ from the clients contract managers point of view.

2. Following the analysis of this gap it will then explore the optimal ways to implement the necessary organizational changes in both systems and people to improve the way contracts are managed. An improvement is identified as being a smaller discrepancy than at present between ‘what was purchased’ and ‘what was supplied’. ‘What was purchased’ is the service that is specified in the contract. ‘What is supplied’ is the service as provided by a service provider.
For example if a contract is entered into to wash and polish your car, washing and polishing is the service that was purchased. If the service provider then only washed the car, washing the car is what was supplied. The discrepancy between the two is that the car was not polished. This identifies a failure in the service. An improvement would be that the car was both washed and polished.

If, however, the service specified in the contract may only have been to polish the car. If the service provider then also washed the car prior to polishing, because without washing he would have caused scratch damage to the car, this is also a discrepancy between ‘what was purchased’ and ‘what was supplied’. In this case the failure was in the specified service because it is necessary to always wash the car prior to polishing. An improvement would be specifying in the contract that the car must always be washed prior to polishing.

It is as important to correctly specify the service as it is to ensure the correct service is delivered. This is because the specified service is what service providers (at this stage tenderers) price to deliver. If one tenderer knows he must always wash before polishing and allows this in his price, his price may be higher because he has allowed for more work. Then if the tenderer who did not allow to wash advises you after the contract is awarded that the car should really be washed before polishing or it may get irreparably scratched, you may then have to pay extra for washing or accept the liability if it is scratched. Either way, because of a deficiency in the specification, you may have selected the lowest priced tender but the contract may cost more overall.

How the Project Evolved
Despite the initial intentions of the project to explore ways to make the contract management process more efficient and effective, particularly the intention to create a change in the contract management system of part-time contract managers, it proved unable to fully attend all its aims.

This was due to a number of factors:

1. The move of the researcher from an insider researcher to an outsider researcher part way through meant that the authority to effect change was removed.
2. The Strategic Procurement division did not have the authority to effect any changes unless they were wholly supported by their client departments. This authority was not sought at a sufficiently senior level.
3. Senior university management only engaged in a minor way on the periphery of the area of research. This may have been instrumental in preventing full collaborative engagement by the participants.
4. The action research interventions that were planned, particularly in the case of Organizational Role Analysis (ORA), were unable to be implemented. This meant the ORA became more of a research tool than a collaborative change vehicle.

Nevertheless an opinion was formed as to what causes a part-time contract manager to neglect the contract manager role. The neglect is not a planned outcome of the contract manager but occurs over time and appears to result from an inability to satisfactorily resolve internal conflicts.

1.2 The preamble

During the late 1990’s the Property Services section at the university went through a turbulent time. The director at the time committed suicide and the university began to feel financial constraints. The focus on the cost and the value, in terms of return on investment in education, became an issue for the Australian Government. A new vice chancellor was appointed along with a Director of Property Services and lower positions in the hierarchy. An engineering consultant was also appointed to prepare preventive maintenance contracts for the mechanical services of the entire multi-building facilities. These facilities enabled the university to deliver its core business of education.

Maintenance of buildings has generally developed over the decades from a practice of ‘when it breaks, then fix it’ (this is known as breakdown maintenance) through a mix of:

- ‘Remove it from service and fix it before it breaks’ (this is known as preventive maintenance) and ‘when it breaks, then fix it’; to
- ‘look at it and if it ain’t broke then don’t fix it’ (this is known as condition monitoring) plus preventive maintenance plus breakdown maintenance.

This is a very brief and simplistic overview of a development cycle that has occurred over many decades. Perhaps the initial development of the cycle may even be traced back to the industrial revolution and the start of the steam era some 300 years ago or even earlier. There have also been many digressions into many variations of these central themes but the main thrust has been:

- a positivistic quantification of the cost of maintenance, the reliability of the systems being maintained; then
- a move towards considering these parameters holistically in the context of the particular enterprise; and
- now, with environmental issues on the agenda, how engineering maintenance best benefits society.
The engineering consultant was a knowledgeable and respected engineer. He prepared contracts that would not only enable the university to maintain its buildings but also provide a number of data collection activities that would facilitate the development of a strategic maintenance plan that would be ready for the next iteration of maintenance contracts in three years time.

For building maintenance this was, if not at the forefront of the Facilities Maintenance Industry, it was certainly towards the 'pointy end'. What is not clear is whether or not the consultant took up his role of ‘doing the best for the university’ by enunciating his philosophy to either the manager of the maintenance group or the engineers who would be managing the contracted work. It is my belief that both the consultant and the manager were practicing Taylorists and ‘Just told them to do it!’ Extremely simplistically, FW Taylor was a management theorist in the early 20th Century who considered that workers should simply be told what to do and they were then expected to do the task on the basis that managers knew, from the application of scientific principles, what must be done and workers did not have the ability, or inclination, to know (Bradshaw 1986).

1.3 How I fit in

In 2001 I was engaged by the university to prepare terms and conditions for Facilities Services that could be applied to its outsourced contracts. It is indicative of the organizational culture that quite adequate terms and conditions are available as Australian Standards however the university required something ‘special’. Outsourcing is a management practice of using contractors to do work which traditionally has been undertaken by the university’s own employees. Whilst I was doing this work the Director Facilities Services became aware of my knowledge and skills within the maintenance management arena. He requested that I review the mechanical maintenance contracts because they did not appear to be delivering the outcomes that had been expected.

My review revealed that all of the provisions in the contract relating to data collection and future strategic management of maintenance; had not been undertaken. A number of reasons were canvassed for this. It was found that the contracts had not been satisfactorily managed by the supervising engineer. Whether this was a result of the engineers’ abilities, the instructions he received or for some other reason was not investigated. I was then involved in negotiating with the contractor to rectify the deficiencies in the work.

1 The ‘pointy end’: if the work of a constantly evolving practice is visualized as a wedge, the ‘pointy end’ is the very start of that evolution.
It took the contractor many months to complete this rectification. The potential cost to the university, if the rectification work had not been undertaken, was quantified as being approximately $720k. To put this in context, the contract was a two year contract with an annual value for preventive maintenance being $320k. When the anticipated breakdown maintenance, which was an additional charge, was included there was an additional cost to the contract of approximately $100k per annum. Experience indicates that a general ‘rule of thumb’ is that one third of the preventive maintenance cost will be incurred as breakdown maintenance. Thus the cost of poor contract management by an engineer, who had been trained in contract management as part of his professional duties, was an actual loss to the University of some 85% of a contract value. This occurred with a contract which was expected to save money!

What went wrong? It was assumed the person had not done as instructed and thus in accordance with a Taylorist management philosophy the contract manager was replaced and the contracts were re-written to address the failures that occurred with the first contract. I don’t know if this was beneficial in the long term. I suspect it was not.

1.4 Why should I do anything to change the way contract management was practiced at the university?

A few years later the university as a whole was also experiencing dire financial circumstances. It had lost $14.2 million in an annual budget of approximately $500 million. Clearly this was not sustainable. A new vice chancellor (VC) had been appointed. She separated the organization into two streams, academic and business operations. New pro vice chancellors (PVC) were appointed to each of these streams. Property Services and Financial Services fell under the gambit of the PVC Business. Part of the PVC Business Service's plan to address this significant loss was to create a department within Financial Services called ‘Strategic Sourcing and Procurement’ (SS&P). I was recruited to be a part of this team by the Director, Strategic Sourcing and Procurement who had previously filled the position of Director Facilities Services. My role was to analyze business units within the university to determine the best method of service delivery. I was to particularly focus on business units that were likely to be better served by outsourced delivery acquired through a competitively tendered contract process. Due to the spectacular failure of the Mechanical Services Contract Management that was controlled by a professional engineer with specific contract management experience, I perceived there would be a need for training and appropriate documentation. Because of the large number of business units that needed to be assessed, the tender evaluation would need to be speedy and accurate. Consequently there was a need to develop computerized tender evaluation that required little double handling by
SS&P staff. I perceived that if I did as had always been done, we would get what had always been got – an unsatisfactory result. If this did not occur in the short term, it would certainly occur in the longer term. Thus a new way of executing contract management needed to be found.

It was at about this time I had also decided to undertake doctoral studies in organizational change. In my new position I would be implementing contract management to a range of outsourced activities. There would be a wide variety of contract managers, some with potentially good skills and others without any contract management skills. I considered that I should try and find a more appropriate method to implement and execute contract management practices.

1.5 Why did I arrive at using a systems psychodynamics approach

In my postgraduate training in maintenance management during the late 1980's I learned to use positivistic tools to statistically quantify the performance of machines and similar tasks. I was also introduced to the motivational models of Maslow, Herzberg and McGregor. I found these intriguing. Maslow's model (Bradshaw 1986) resonated best with me and I will still frequently return to it, or its more contemporary development, when I try to explain why individual motivations change.

I do not consider myself a charismatic leader and I often reflect on the comments by one of my superiors during my early career:

   It is not what you do during your time with a business that is most important, it is the practices that endure long after you have left that are the real measure of your effectiveness and success in a position (role).

I was clearly primed to believe that motivation for long term results is something that must come from within individuals rather than from an extrinsic motivator. I had observed in others the 'just give 'em a dose of motivation' school of thought but it does not sit at all comfortably with me. I believe that motivational models which seek longer term intrinsic motivation rather than charismatic leadership's extrinsic motivation, which only exists whilst the leader is present, are more effective.

An early career manager also offered me comfort at one time when everything was going wrong with 'If you don't make mistakes you won't have done anything!' Thus when I moved on to study for my masters degree I already believed that mistakes were 'okay' and when
action research appeared as a research paradigm it coalesced a comforting thought into an active process of research. I was convinced about action research before I knew about it!

My supervisor for my masters degree became a good friend as a result of the close interaction such study creates. When he suggested I should consider doctoral candidature I gave it some deep thought before I offered myself to be interviewed by the course leaders.

At the interview I was asked things such as ‘Had I read Krantz' work?’ and ‘What did I know about systems psychodynamics theory in an organizational dynamics context?’ I must have looked sufficiently blank and my answers reflected an engineer's very basic knowledge of motivational theory because the interview quickly moved on to my managerial practice and what I was currently experiencing. It appeared that my answers along the lines of ‘in my experience external motivation is not long lasting - there has to be something else within people that achieves long lasting effects’ were sufficient for the interviewers to decide that I could actually benefit from this candidature. I was ushered to the door with encouraging mumblings, given a copy of James Krantz ‘Anxiety and the New Order’ (Krantz 1998) with the suggestion that I read it over Christmas and meet them again in the New Year. In reading the paper I was 'hooked' and thus commenced an exploration into the application of the tangled and murky world of practical systems psychodynamics by a manager of very positivistic technocrats whose educational roots came from a similarly positivistic background but was opening his mind to the intangible, ethereal, even earthy, realms that may well contain many of the answers to generating transformational changes within a workforce.

1.6 What the project was to achieve

I return to my initial exploratory draft to answer some of the questions around what the project was to achieve - What is my curiosity? What are the questions to which I am seeking answers/insights?

There are several issues that interest me and I have no doubt that as time goes on other issues will also arouse my curiosity. Presently there are two key issues: the first is the best way to manage contracts to get the intended outcomes and the second is how to best implement the necessary changes that either a new, radically changed process, such as outsourcing, or even a process with minor refinements will require if the maximum perceived benefits are to be achieved from the changes. There are a myriad causes for the delivery of outcomes to fail and these range from a deficient process design through an unrealistic expectation on the part of the contract manager to faulty implementation of a change process. It may even be that the change process
was not identified because the expectation of outsourcing was that all the problems of managing inhouse staff and resources would just disappear

This was further distilled into a research question, as follows:

What is the most suitable contract management system to use in a complex organization that is transitioning from a collegiate environment to an environment based on contractual law and how can it be implemented to achieve lasting change?

1.7 The project design

The university organization I am studying is located principally in the city of Melbourne, Australia. It commenced practice in the late 19th Century as a Working Men’s College. In the late 20th Century it was accredited as a university. It had moved to this position from its roots as a Working Men’s College through a focus on technical education and as an Institute of Advanced Education. The current student body consists of 55,000 students. There is a staff of nearly 3,000 full time equivalent people.

The university today consists of a board, senior executive team, a wide variety of individual discipline Schools and a large number of departments which handle the business issues of a large commercial organization. Whilst it is a non profit organization it obtains fees from students which range from students who pay the entire cost of the education they receive, through students who are partly funded by government grants across to students for whom the entire cost of the education is funded by a third party scholarship. These scholarships may be from organizations not associated with the university or from the university or government or any combination of these three categories.

Academic services are provided by a combination of contractors to the university and the university’s own staff. Similarly, business services are provided by a combination of contractors to the university and the university’s own staff who operate under the control of Federal Industrial Awards. Different sections of the university, academic or business services, are able to provide the work they are required to do through any combination of staff and contractors.

It can therefore be seen that the organization is large and potentially complex. Within the business services section approximately $120m of the work is undertaken by contracts with specialist companies.

The specific issues that needed to be considered in the research were:
Size
The university is large, it has some 55,000 students (direct customers), 3500 staff and a financial turnover of some $500m.

Complexity
The university is complex because it consists of many isolated departments delivering different teaching and learning products in a myriad of ways. The support part of the university similarly consists of departments which would be large and complex organizations in their own right. For example the property services department has a portfolio of more than 100 buildings. These buildings range from brand new purpose built environments to historically classified buildings which were originally built for a completely different purpose in an entirely different era. The department provides both capital and operational services across all building construction and operational disciplines.

Maturity of employee experience
The cohort of part-time contract managers that I am researching range widely from relatively new employees with limited experience in educational establishments and are also inexperienced in contract management, through employees who have been in the education field for many years but have not had a contract management role, to employees who have been contract managers in educational establishments for almost their entire career.

Personality Profiling
As part of my masters degree, and at times throughout my career, I have been exposed to personality profiling as a means to determine if someone will ‘fit in’ to a team or an environment. Thus at the early stages of my method development I considered that it may be an appropriate aspect of people’s psychological makeup to investigate. I investigated this aspect of my proposed project design as part of the practicum associated with this degree. In the final report (Strachan 2005) my conclusion about personality profiling was:

   In the original consideration of my project I had thought a knowledge of personality type would assist me in the development of an implementation plan for the group of contract managers. However, I now consider that whilst an understanding of personality types will assist in one on one negotiations, because it will help to identify potentially common ground and also how to best present argument to a particular personality type to ensure it is properly communicated; the dynamics that emerge when a group forms requires a different approach to a one on one negotiation. But as a rider, personality profiling does not guarantee how a person will behave it only indicates their preferential method of operating.
Hence I did not continue this further and focused on Group Relations Theory. I noted as a key learning in the practicum that ‘Individual personality types are not as important in a group environment as giving and taking up of a role’.

1.8 The organization of this thesis

This thesis is arranged in a series of chapters that outline the reasons for the research, the methodology, the research activities which included action research and reviews of previous work experiences, and then concludes with an overall analysis of the research.

Chapter one provides an overview of the organization which is the subject of the research, the participants and why I intended to adopt my initial approach.

In Chapters two and three I present a world view of contract management and the way contract management is presently undertaken within the subject organization. I then discuss the methodology that has been adopted, where it sits within the world view and why it is appropriate for this research.

Chapters four to nine describe and analyze the various iterations of action research. During the analysis of these iterations a major hypothesis is developed. This hypothesis describes the possible interaction of simple systems to create complex systems and roles which may be unsustainable due to the intolerable anxiety experienced by the role holders.

The last phase of the research is contained in Chapters ten and eleven where previous work and life experience is used to gain a better understanding of what occurred during the research.

The penultimate chapter, Chapter twelve, considers and analyses the entire project with particular emphasis on the hypothesis which was developed.

To conclude, Chapter thirteen reflects on the environment in which the researcher was working and considers where the research could be extended.

1.9 The research question

The research question which was intended to be answered has been described earlier in this chapter. The initial research question is detailed in this chapter as I outline why I came to undertake this particular investigation. However, exploratory action research, by its very nature, starts with a question. This question then evolves throughout the research. During
the period of final analysis I determined that the iterations of action research had actually led me to a slightly different research question. This question is more accurately described as:

The systems psychodynamics interface of a person and a system-in-the-mind is the mental construct of role. In a part-time contract manager’s environment two roles are taken up simultaneously, a professional role and a contract management role. It appears the contract management role often fails over a period of time. This research will aim to discover why this is the case and if there is a model which describes how two systems may be integrated to enable a role to be successfully taken.
Chapter 2 – What is contract management?

2.1 What is contract management?

To identify a definition of contract management within the worldview, references have been considered from both academic and general industry sources to identify what may be accepted as a practical definition of contract management. It is apparent that contract management is referred to by a number of different names with the writers attaching either a wider or narrower context to the name to suit their circumstances or knowledge. In the following section I have used each writer’s particular predilection to nomenclature, whether it is contract management, contract administration, project management or project administration before we elect at the end of the section to define what the term contract management will mean for this research.

Historically contract administration has been a basic function being purely a process type activity and leaving little or no need for variation. Contract administration has consisted of little more than following up on orders and inspecting incoming merchandise. (Cavinato & Kauffman 1999, p. 1043)

Cavinato and Kauffman (1999) in conjunction with Gordon (1991) define the current objectives of Contract Administration to:

- ensure that all necessary contractual requirements are spelled out clearly correctly and concisely;
- ensure the staff of both the public sector organization and the supplier understand their responsibilities under the contract;
- flush out and resolve as many potential problems as possible before the contract takes effect;
- check (after the contract becomes effective) to assure that the supplier provides goods or services in accordance with the contract;
- document problems and take the appropriate action to resolve or minimize their impact; and
- take the lessons that are learned and utilize them( to the extent possible) to improve future contracting arrangements.

This defined purpose suggests that there are other processes which lead up to the contract administration process. The contract administration process is only ensuring contractual requirements are spelled out and does not create the contractual processes. Furthermore, contract administration may utilize lessons learned to improve future arrangements. It is
unclear in this definition whether such learning is contributed at a strategic level or if it only applies to the operational processes of contract administration.

Zant and Schlossberg (2002) in an Accenture report compiled in conjunction with I-many (suppliers of contract management software) provide their opinion that:

Key processes such as contract creation, execution, fulfilment, evaluation and renewal are managed piecemeal throughout an organization with little alignment to organizational measures and objectives. Even when formal processes are in place they often rely on untrained personnel and leverage antiquated manual systems with limited integration (if any) across the enterprise.

Zant and Schlossberg (2002, p. 2)

This indicates that they consider contract management to extend from the creation of a contract to its renewal; a greater scope than Cavinato and Kauffman (1999) but they do not include any strategic consideration of organizational needs that stem from integrating organizational management and strategic development with the contract scope.

Zant and Schlossberg (2002) continue further to define Contract Management as having five sequential phases:

- Plan;
- Create;
- Transact;
- Settle; and
- Evaluate.

These phases are then expanded to clearly indicate that these authors consider that there is a strategic element during the planning and development phase expanding on the issues that arise from inadequate contract creation processes:

In organizations without formal contract creation processes these documents will be non standard and the ability to access them after a contract is completed is unlikely. Even with formal contract processes accessing previous versions of contracts negotiations addendums etc in a manual system is arduous at best.

(Zant & Schlossberg 2002, p. 7)

In 1999 the Legislative Research Commission of Kentucky, USA was commissioned to investigate State Agency - Service Contract Administration. They define contract administration in accordance with the National Association of State Purchasing Officials as follows:
The administration of various facets of contracts to assure that the contractor’s total performance is in accordance with the contractual commitments and obligations to the purchaser are fulfilled. In governments this administration may include responsibility delegated by the central procurement authority to using agencies. (Legislative Research Commission 1999, p. 19)

This eliminates the strategic development phase of the scope of the project but allows an administrator to select the contract type and procurement method because they further state it ‘begins when the agency develops a clear concept of its need and a statement of work. It ends when the contract is audited after the work is complete’. (Legislative Research Commission 1999)

In summary the Legislative Research Commission (1999, p. 20) state ‘Contract Administration begins before the contract is let and ends after the contract is finished’.

This suggests a halfway house approach with some strategic elements left to the administrator and some provided as a fait accompli.

Duncan (1996), to quote Morris (2004) is considered by many project management professionals to be the authority. Duncan (1996) considers Contract Administration during the procurement phase to be only interested in managing the relationship with the seller. However, Duncan (1996, p. 131) later states ‘Contract administration is the process of ensuring the seller’s performance meets contractual requirements’ and further that:

Contract administration includes application of the appropriate project management processes to the contractual relationships and integration of the outputs from these processes into the overall management of the project.

This second quote suggests that contract administration is a subset of a more widely encompassing project management activity.

2.2 In the wider realm it is known as Project Management

Morris (2004, p. 2) discusses project management in considerable depth by considering whether it is purely a process or perhaps something more, thus raising the possibility that the activity of undertaking a project by contract is neither universally defined nor are the extent of the activities which comprise the task clearly delineated:
Should the paradigm be an implementation, execution on-time, in budget, to scope or should we be taking a broader view and including the setting up of the project and the delivering of it to achieve stakeholder satisfaction?

He continues:
There are probably something like at least 100,000 or more people …who might be expected to say that project management is as defined in the Project Management Institute (PMI) Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge …many practitioners, academics and others however believe this model to have serious shortcomings…one begins to suspect, in fact, that it represents an old-fashioned view of project management as tool based, ignoring the broader context and treating strategy and technology as a given, with people essentially as an interchangeable commodity.

Morris & Hough (1987) measure success in terms of outcomes with processes almost incidental to the result. Morris (2004) advises that [Cooke Davies] takes this further by considering processes and practices as competency inputs and the use of these to derive an outcome as capabilities; thereby suggesting in a manner similar to ‘the end justifying the means’ that the start and finish of the project are wherever it is necessary to deliver a satisfactory outcome. Morris (2004) continues by distinguishing projects from non-projects by the need for a project to have a development cycle whereas a non-project is a steady state operation. This appears a simplistic view of modern management methods that incorporate techniques of continuous improvement or action science where there is a portion of the management cycle which reflects and improves the process.

However Morris (2004) does conclude that project management covers the entire activity of integrating a series of activities:
the dominant model is now far from just project control … It is the management discipline of how one initiates, develops and implements projects for stakeholder success and includes portfolio and program management, project strategy, technology management and commercial management as much as the traditional areas of project control and organization.
Morris (2004, p.4)

2.3 What are the models?
Morris (2004) offers a simple model of project management to demonstrate the difference between a project and a non-project.
He contends the dominant model is no longer merely project control as in the Duncan (1996) model. He also considers and discards the International Project Management Association’s (IPMA) Competence Baseline, the Japanese Engineering Advancement Association’s (ENAA) P2M model and concludes:

It is the management discipline of how one initiates develops and implements projects for stakeholder success and includes portfolio and program management, project strategy, technology management and commercial management as much as the traditional areas of project control and organization. (Morris 2004, p. 4)

This is summarised in the following Association for Project Management (APM) project management body of knowledge diagram.

| 1.0 General | 1.1 Project Management | 1.3 Portfolio Management |
| 1.2 Programme Management | 1.4 Project Context |
| 2.0 Strategic | 2.1 Project Success Criteria | 2.4 Risk Management |
| 2.2 Strategy/Project Management plan | 2.5 Quality Management |
| 2.3 Value Management | 2.6 Safety Health and Environment |
| 2.7 Ethics |
| 3.0 Control: | 3.1 Work content and Scope Management | 4.0 Technical |
| 3.2 Time Scheduling/Phasing | 4.1 Design, Production & Handover Management | 5.0 Commercial |
| 3.4 Budgeting & Cost Management | 4.2 Requirements Management | 5.1 Business Case |
| 3.5 Change Control | 4.3 Technology Management | 5.2 Marketing and Sales |
| 3.6 Performance Management | 4.4 Estimating | 5.3 Financial |
| 3.7 Information Management | 4.5 Value Engineering | 5.4 Procurement |
| 4.6 Modelling and testing | 4.7 Configuration Management | 5.5 Bidding |
| 4.7 Configuration Management | 5.6 Contract Management | 5.7 Legal Awareness |
| 5.0 Commercial | 6.0 Organizational | 7.0 People |
| 5.1 Business Case | 6.1 Lifecycle design and Management | 7.1 Communication |
| 5.2 Marketing and Sales | 6.1.1 Opportunity | 7.2 Teamwork |
| 5.3 Financial | 6.1.2 Design and Development | 7.3 Leadership |
| 5.4 Procurement | 6.1.3 Production | 7.4 Decision making |
| 5.5 Bidding | 6.1.4 Handover | 7.5 Negotiating & Influencing |
| 5.6 Contract Management | 6.1.5 Post project Evaluation Review | 7.6 Conflict Management |
| 5.7 Legal Awareness | 6.2 Organization Structure | 7.7 Project Management Competency Development |
| 6.0 Organizational | 6.3 Organization Roles |
| 6.1 Lifecycle design and Management | 7.8 Personnel Management |
| 6.1.1 Opportunity | |
| 6.1.2 Design and Development | |
| 6.1.3 Production | |
| 6.1.4 Handover | |
| 6.1.5 Post project Evaluation Review | |
| 6.2 Organization Structure | |
| 6.3 Organization Roles | |
| 7.0 People | |
| 7.1 Communication | |
| 7.2 Teamwork | |
| 7.3 Leadership | |
| 7.4 Decision making | |
| 7.5 Negotiating & Influencing | |
| 7.6 Conflict Management | |
| 7.7 Project Management Competency Development | |
| 7.8 Personnel Management | |

Figure 2.2  Association for Project Management (APM) project management body of knowledge diagram (4th Edition 2000)
Morris (2001, p. 22) concludes that internationally there is confusion about the content of the Project Management profession:

However, the fact that there are at least two (or three) quite different versions of the Body of Knowledge (BOK) – Project Management Institute’s (PMI) and APM’s (IPMA’s) – implies confusion at the highest level on what the philosophy and content of the profession is.

It is therefore apparent that even internationally there is a number of different ways that project management is viewed.

2.4 National view

Baccarini (2004) identified that project managers in Australia have two distinct views about a projects success. Some, he found, perceived project success solely in terms of the traditional project objectives of time, cost and quality; others considered that success also included the effectiveness of the project’s product. Thus supporting the international findings of Morris (2001) who says:

there are at least two (or three) quite different versions of the BOK.....implies confusion at the highest level on what the philosophy and content of the profession is.

During the course of my candidature I was employed by the Strategic Sourcing and Procurement department of the university. The department regularly received advertising material for training courses in project or contract management/administration. I reviewed this material as being typical of the courses that are available to the Australian worker. This review identified a focus on setting up the project and the contract type. It also identified that courses had a predominance of construction type contracting and had little in terms of service contracts. Thus supporting Morris (2004) that steady state management is not a project but something else. This suggests that professional project managers in Australia do not include the plethora of outsourced services worthy of inclusion in the disciplines offered by project management. Why project managers adopt this stance is unclear but Morris (2002) offers further comment about the difficulties in developing organizational learning. He questions why it is so difficult to get people to adopt organizational learning. He then comments about the difficulty in achieving the results executives expect.

Crawford (2000, p. 1) provides further confirmation that there is probably another factor to successful management than just knowledge:

Analysis suggests that there is little direct relationship between perceived performance in the workplace and the level of project management knowledge and experience reported against other project management standards (PMBOK Guide
and Australian National Competency Standards for Project Management) or previous research findings.

This apparent gap in a more positivistic discipline lends weight to the need for consideration of a systems psychodynamics approach to implementing contract management. The vast amount of literature addressing the provision of correct contract types and clear definition of the projects requirements following observation also lends further support to the focus of this thesis:

No contract arrangement can guarantee a problem free project execution. In the final analysis, it is the quality of the people and the quality of the management systems of the owner and the contract that is the best guarantor of success. (Consilium 2003)

2.5 Are we considering project management as in the wider realm or is it a narrower focus?

It is becoming clear from the world view that the wider role of project management is well outside the context of this research. In the university context contract management has a focus that extends from some time during the procurement process to at least the conclusion of the post contract review and concludes before consideration of the integration of the contract with the wider business operation. This latter aspect is considered the responsibility of a more senior role. However, the exact delineation of the contract role will become part of the research. It may have a bearing on its practice.

2.5.1 The university context

Contract management at the university is necessary because services are outsourced. The alternative is to insource, i.e. provide the service using employees to deliver operational and management services. In the context of this research at the university an outsourced service includes provision by the supplier of operational & operational management staff but does not include strategic management as part of the service. However, this does not preclude strategic management being outsourced via either an individual personal services contract or an outsourced service. I hypothesise, and do not propose to explore further, that contract management may fail because the application of an outsourcing solution is inappropriate for the provision of a particular service. Therefore I shall consider the reasons for outsourcing recurrent services on a project basis or, alternatively insourcing, in an endeavour to highlight the reason for a potential failure may not be a failure of the implementation of contract management, rather that the application of an outsourcing solution was inappropriate. Recurrent services are those services that are required for the life of the business but are subject to a regular review and contract renewal to either the same supplier or a different supplier. The contract renewal is on the basis of defined selection criteria or a perceived
failure of the current supplier to deliver the required level of service and a belief that an alternative supplier will provide a more satisfactory service.

2.5.2 Why move from outsource to insource?
A number of authors have offered reasons why activities should be insourced. Payne (2001) offers the following reasons why a previously outsourced service may be insourced:

- Poor contract performance;
- poor contract management;
- Outdated service delivery/spec;
- technical obsolescence;
- Best value service review;
- lack of competition; and
- Mixture of internal and external pressures.

He then continues to offer the opinion that:

Insourcing may be considered as an option when it is felt that the initial decision to outsource services may have been wrong, ill informed, poorly managed/monitored or has now become inappropriate. (Payne 2001, p. 2)

and further:

Contracts that have been outsourced – but not properly monitored or managed - will result in poor performance, poor customer satisfaction and poor value for money. A clear specification and a realistic expectation of service delivery are vital in order to manage and monitor the contract effectively (Payne 2001, p. 7)

This suggests that the decision to insource could be a failure of the management of the outsourcing process. Indeed I would suggest this is often the initial, albeit frequently unconscious, reason the service was initially outsourced. To which Payne (2001) offers a potential solution being:

A Best Value review of a service function will focus on the Four C’s:
- To Challenge the fundamental basis of service delivery;
- To Consult on the views of all relevant stakeholders;
- To Compare the services(s) against local and national standards; and
- To ensure the provision of Competitive services.

If, when the provision of a service was outsourced, the company either knowingly or unwittingly exported knowledge and expertise that resulted in the contractor acquiring an inordinate power base from which to negotiate contract renewals and prices the company
may elect to bring the service back inhouse. Lonsdale and Cox (in Payne 2001, p. 9) summarise:

factors which lead to supplier leverage as:

- Poor Contracting – issues that are known within the firm are omitted from the contract as wither inappropriate personnel are assigned to the task of closing the deal or the personnel concerned have inappropriate priorities;
- Limited supply market options – the firm chooses to outsource despite there being a limited number of supply options available to it;
- High asset specificity – because of the highly specific nature of the investment a firm makes in an outsourcing relationship. i.e., there are high switching costs, there is an effective absence of competition at the end of the contract period;
- Uncertainty – in situations where the firm has made highly specific investments, it will be even more vulnerable to supplier leverage if the nature of transaction between the buyer and the supplier is characterised by uncertainty. Uncertainty will lead to an incomplete contract, which will in time give the supplier the opportunity to charge excess fees.

Luciani (2005) offers an opinion on insourcing from a facility management perspective and suggests that maximum value from insourcing is derived when:

- Facility Management is considered a strategic function;
- The organization is centralised in operations;
- The organization is reasonably large; and
- The organization predominately owns its assets, which are specific in nature.

Thus it appears there are two basic categories of consideration for insourcing currently outsourced services. They are:

1. Failure of a currently outsourced service to deliver the expectations of the client; and
2. Unsuitability of the service to be outsourced either from inherent issues in the business or because the business circumstances have changed.

2.5.3 Why move from insource to outsource?

Handy 1994 (in Payne 2001, p. 3) writes ‘Organizations are responding to the challenge of efficiency by exporting unproductive work and people as fast as they can’. Then Payne (2001, p. 3) contends this may not always have been the correct decision ‘rather than tackling or managing issues …many organizations outsourced what they considered to be inflexible and uncooperative departments or service functions’.
However, Gartner in (Street 2002, p. 1) predicts outsourcing arrangements will fail through bad management and in the same reference Aitchison suggests it may be price related in that ‘everybody wants to get the best deal, but you have to ask yourself whether the service you require can really be delivered at that price’.

Thus whilst these are admittedly cautious about the process of implementing that offer insight to failed outsourcing projects, Luciani (2005, p. 20) is more explicit in offering ways of maximising outsourcing value in a facilities management context with:

Maximum value is derived from performing facility management activities via an outsourcer when:

1. Facility Management is considered non core;
2. The client organization has decentralised operations;
3. The client organization is in a highly competitive globalised environment; and
4. When the client organization is limited due to bounded rationality.

However Luciani (2005) does temper this opinion with a hypothesis that movement from insourcing to outsourcing may be the result of a normal business cycle that consists of a procurement strategy change that maximises the value versus cost ratio, then witnesses a deterioration in the value cost ratio until it is restored by a change in procurement strategy.

In exploring the arguments for outsourcing Verspaandonk (2001, p. 7) offers the following citation:

The Australian National University’s Professor Richard Mulgan, a commentator on issues relating to government outsourcing, outlines his overall ‘rules of thumb’ thus:

Savings are most likely from contracting out where the required service can be easily specified and monitored, and where a competitive market of potential suppliers exists independent of government patronage. Cleaning catering and rubbish services are standout successes worldwide. Conversely, if the service is complex and requires constant quality control, savings tend to be eaten up by monitoring costs. If there are few alternative suppliers, governments can easily become captive to monopolistic exploitation.

Wider economic effects also need to be considered: will a decision to outsource stimulate local economic activity and develop local skills? Or will the contract be awarded to an overseas company which will import its own expertise and repatriate the profits?
Mulgan in (Verspaandonk 2001, p. 9) further argues:

Managerial accountability is increased where detailed contractual provisions allow ministers or government officials to exercise more effective control over contractors than they do over subordinates in their own departments.

Whilst this may be good argument and presently applicable to both government entities and potentially also applicable to the university, it is perhaps more an indicator that the management system and/or culture requires attention. A detailed exploration of this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this thesis but should never-the-less be considered as a potential initiator for incorrect application of the outsourcing solution that presents as a strong argument. I hypothesise it may also guarantee failure because the authority of subordinates is undermined and a culture that limits the authority of a superior over a subordinate as against a contractor doing the same job is dysfunctional.

From this investigation I contend that outsourcing should be pursued as a solution if:

- The core business is capable of managing the contract and doesn’t view outsourcing as a self managing solution;
- The service can be well specified in terms of either outputs or inputs;
- The service is not core business;
- There are a wide selection of service providers in the open market;
- The cost of changing incumbent contractors is low;
- Outsourcing is not seen as the solution for current management inadequacies; and
- The business operates from a variety of locations.

The following diagram shows my understanding of contract management and in-house management and their relationship to various activities. It was referred to earlier in this thesis but is included again for ease of reference.
In the above figure 2.3, contract management consists of two distinctly different sets of activities. The first occurs prior to the award of a contract and considers what is to be achieved by outsourcing activities. This set of activities is further divided into two phases. The strategic phase which addresses the need to outsource the supply, how the services will
be sourced and developing the documentation which specifies what is to be supplied. Considerations will be the cultural fit of the supplier with the university, the cost of the supply in terms of both the money the university will pay for the supply and the cost to the university to manage the supply. The second phase will source suitable suppliers and then identify the most appropriate supplier at that time. The third phase comprises the management of the supply process and periodic and final reviews to determine the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of the contract.

2.6  The University

2.6.1  When does project management occur at the University?

Project management in the university occurs in many ways. For example in an academic sense it could be the management of a research project or the delivery of a learning project. While in support services project management may be the management of a contract to supply of goods, such as foodstuff or stationery, or services. In some instances it is recognized as project management, for example in the supply of new buildings or major IT projects. In these cases a specific project or contract manager is dedicated to the project, and their position description and role is that of a project manager. These people are usually trained and have acquired experience over a period of time managing increasingly complex projects.

The treatment of outsourced services is quite different. With outsourced services the need for project management appears less well understood. The management of outsourced contracts usually only consists of verifying that an invoice complies with the terms of the contract. Where the contract covers the supply of goods these are sometimes checked. However, where there is a supply of services, verification of contractor compliance with key performance indicators does not generally appear to be documented. Frequently key performance indicators are not included in the contract and contract reviews are not usually undertaken on a regular basis. If a person is nominated as the contract manager for a specific contract that supplies services to their department they will frequently undertake the role as a part-time adjunct to their principal role. They will have little training and any training they have is usually on-the-job.

This situation is similar to the findings of the Legislative Research Commission Research Report 285 (1999) where responses to a Contract Management Survey found that:

- 62.5% of Agencies only received on-the-job training;
- 58.81% of Agencies using the service managed its own contracts; and
- 39.8% of Agencies consider more contract administration training is needed.
2.6.2 In the context of project management at the University what should contract management be?
At the university contract management needs to be effective and efficient. That is contract management needs to use world best practice from the award of a contract to the final review report. There has been extensive research into the best way to undertake contract management and it is summarised by a research report compiled by the Kentucky Legislative Research Commission Research Report No 285 in table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1 Recommended Contract Administration Features (Legislative Research Commission 1999, p. 21)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre Contract</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop in-depth agency needs analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Performance case work statement with measurable deliverables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bid Solicitation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include work statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicate how state will maintain oversight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address access to records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe standards for performance measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contractor Selection</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assure that process is fair, open and impartial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure adequate competition exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contract Provisions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include clear statement of services expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicate roles and responsibilities of contractor and agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define performance standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contract Administration Plan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Contract Administration plan to serve as a guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contract Manager</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appoint contract manager to facilitate agency – contractor communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Monitoring</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use contract administration plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with contractors to clarify work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct onsite monitoring or inspections and follow ups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Payment Procedures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link payment to satisfactory contractor performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fiscal Monitoring</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the roles, responsibilities related to processing vouchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documentation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain organized contract files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem Resolution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle complaints and use sanctions and penalties, if necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closeout Procedures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use defined close out procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post Contract</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contract Evaluation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct customer satisfaction surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Audit</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct post contract financial audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Evaluation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate the contractor’s performance once the contract ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost Benefit Analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure cost effectiveness of contracting out services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7 Conclusion

It may be seen that contract management in the international context is extremely wide, varied and comprises many different models. In the university context the type of management which will be considered in this research is contract management.

In the next chapter I will describe the research methodology that was used to gather data.
Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

In this chapter I shall discuss action research as a research methodology, its position in the world view and its suitability for this research. I will then provide a brief overview of the other methodologies I used.

3.1 Overview - What is Action Research

Action research is a dynamic research and learning process. It requires the participation of both the researcher and those being researched. It is particularly appropriate for social science research as it allows phenomenological data to be used and it allows for processes of change to be discerned and mapped as they are occurring (Long 1999). Phenomenological data is difficult to quantify numerically and predicatively in the way most positivistic research requires. It is more suited to descriptive and narrative methods. In addition, action research is used to create new action in organizational systems, hence it includes a deliberate change agenda.

Action research is a super ordinate term that also includes action learning. According to Cherry (1999, p. 6) ‘learning and change are not just about making adjustments to cope better with existing conditions they involve asking whether what currently exists is what we should live with’.

The key differentiator to other types of research is that the method is cyclic and each cycle is informed by previous cycles. It is not expected that previous cycles will only confirm that the overall approach of the research is correct. The result of any individual cycle is equally valid and informative if it advises that the result of an enquiry into an issue is not relevant to the research.

Although there are different descriptions of action research, each cycle generally includes a planning phase followed by an action phase and an observation or data collection phase. The phase which then differentiates action research from other experiential cyclical methods is a reflection phase.

3.1.1 What Action Research will achieve in this project

I expected that at the very least the action research process would arrive at increased knowledge about what contract management meant and how it was practiced within the university. Given the change agenda of action research, the best result to be expected would be a form of contract management that would deliver long lasting results from people who had minimal formal training in contract management. However, other organizational changes
resulting from financial imperatives were causing significant turmoil and anxiety amongst staff. Therefore it was perhaps more realistic to expect that the action research would identify a working hypothesis that would enable a way forward to be proposed for future implementation. The validity of this research would arise from the data being collected from staff members who were also responsible for achieving the outcomes.

3.1.2 What is Action Research and where it originated

This section about action research is based on a joint project I undertook for my masters degree in a writing cluster with Rob Dobrynski and Wilma Kurvink.

It seems that, in western organizations, there is an inclination to seek answers rapidly. There is a tendency to jump to problem solving before a close exploration of the meaning of the ‘presenting problems’. Research influenced by those who seek rapid answers at the expense of rigorous research often arrive at outcomes which address the initial presentation without finding more extensive, underlying systemic causes. Mitroff and Linstone (1993) share the concern that the much favoured inquiry systems of the past may no longer be appropriate. They propose five Inquiry Systems (IS) that are relevant to research. They do caution problems will occur if the particular IS use is indiscriminate or inappropriate. Their proposals are:

Inductive-Consensual (I-C) – suited to bounded, well-structured research questions and returns single number answers. Few problems fit the model of this IS.

Analytic-Deductive (A-D) – this works for simple propositions that support a fragmentationist/reductionist approach, and provides ‘best choice’ answers. It fails when applied to human behaviour because of its reliance on absolute propositions. Human behaviour appears far more relative.

While Mitroff and Linstone (1993) are convinced that I-C and A-D models will continue to be used, they believe greater abilities are required in inquiry systems, challenged by the increasingly more complex problems being faced, and promote the following three systems:

Dialectic (D) – truth is pursued by a confrontation of opposites.

Multiple Realities (MR) – are interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary systems, which integrate knowledge from different professions and disciplines into a comprehensive view of a problem. However Multiple Realities still have a tendency to practice reductionism, in the desire to arrive at a ‘single best’ solution.
**Unbounded Systems Thinking (UST)** – This is useful for fuzzy or complex problems. The output seeks to enrich the participants through learning, leading to a greater knowledge, and involves all of the sciences and professions, postulating an interconnectedness to manage the complexity of whole systems. UST is becoming increasingly important in dealing with the unbounded complexity requiring a transdisciplinary approach to generate opportunities for long lasting solutions and fundamental learning of individuals.

In discussing differing research worldviews, it is informative to consider the illustrative contribution of Ellinor and Gerard (1998) who present the paradox encountered in dealing with organizations, and selecting the inquiry system appropriate to the circumstance. Their approach can be seen in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1**   **Organizations as self-organizing holograms, a blending of the old and the new ways of organizing and managing** (Ellinor & Gerard 1998, p. 45)

The inner circle representing older views on human systems is contained within the outer circle, representing current worldviews. Importantly, the boundaries between them are permeable, allowing recognition, and continued use of methods successful in the past, while accepting our worldview is expanding based on what we now know about human systems.
The arrows radiating from the circles reflect the increases in our knowledge of human systems.

Gronhaug and Olson (1999, p. 6) indicate that action research has become both acclaimed and criticized. While they attribute such controversy to the overly embracing description of action research resulting in many types of research falling under its category, they add more, which generates curiosity:

Different views on what constitutes scientific research and knowledge prevail. Core assumptions about ontology, epistemology, methodology and human nature are often stated implicitly only, and thus add to the ambiguities associated with this research approach.

While there are many supporters of action research as social science research, perhaps researchers using this method have lacked the adherence to established processes for detailed recording of observations and events. Sorensen (1992) comments that inspections of completed studies indicate action researchers have forgotten to report in detail their research activities and a ‘step by step’ indication of how they arrived at their interpretations and actions. This is seen as contributing to the poor image of action research within the traditional research community.

Gronhaug and Olson (1999) comment that social science research is influenced ‘very much’ by an ‘objectivist’ ideal, and that the extreme positivist point of view disregards participants and views reality ‘as a concrete structure’. They also note that the constructs and perspectives of individuals acting within their mental modes may differ markedly from established scientific knowledge. To what extent these factors will influence the behaviour of participants in a research context, and therefore the research results, should be of interest to social science researchers.

Gronhaug and Olson (1999) have synthesized a set of comparison tables to give insight into the considerations the researcher may reference when considering utilizing classical experiments or Action Research (see Table 3.1).
Table 3.1  
Comparison between classical experiments and Action Research (Gronhaug & Olson 1999, p. 11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Approach</th>
<th>Experiments</th>
<th>Action Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control over treatment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on co-variation between cause and effect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on time order of cause and effect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to control group</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randomisation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on real-life problems</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration between researcher(s) and the client</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on change</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longitudinal double loop learning</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Research activities</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.3  
An understanding of Action Research options

Kemmis & Mc Taggart (in Dickens & Watkins 1999, p. 23) quote:

that Action Research aims to build communities of people committed to enlightening themselves about the relationship between circumstances, action, and the consequences of their own situation, and emancipating themselves from the institutional and personal constraints which limit their power to live their own legitimate…values.

Dickens & Watkins (1999) contend there is no definitive approach to action research, which they view as part of its strength and part of its problem. They cite Peters and Robinson (1984) in claiming that action research has not evolved into a unified theory, but has been reflected into disparate definitions and characterizations.

Kurt Lewin is attributed by Dickens and Watkins (1999) with developing the action research model in the mid-1940’s. It was seen as a methodology that married theory and action, producing informed and improved behaviour and social change. Its practitioners generated context-bound, values-based knowledge (the research) and solutions from their inquiries into system problems (the action). Argyris also suggests a definition of action research that emphasizes research and action aimed at achieving desirable change:
Action Research takes its cues – its questions, puzzles and problems – from the perception of practitioners within particular, local practice contexts. It builds descriptions and theories within the practice context itself, and tests them through intervention experiments – that is, through experiments that bear the double burden of testing hypotheses and effecting some (putatively) desirable change in the situation. (Dickens & Watkins 1999, p. 128)

His definition provides interventions as experimental manipulation serving the problem-solving goal. Participants in the process gain knowledge from the research undertaken to substantiate the intervention (action), and exercise reflection on outcomes at each stage of the process and share in the diagnosis of problems. Elden and Chisholm (1993) consider Lewin’s (1946) ‘Action Research’ as the ‘classical model’ and identify varieties of action research that continue to emerge. They introduce to my considerations the notion that action research is focused at increasing the adaptive capacity and ability to innovate within our systems (Dickens & Watkins 1999). Heller (1976, in Dickens & Watkins 1999) notes that the distinguishing feature amongst the varying action research methodologies may be more the choice of intervention approach used rather than any fundamental difference. Dickens & Watkins (1999) view the various definitions and methods of action research as having virtually limitless applications in both multiple situations and practically all settings, with great potential for organizational learning.

Action research is based upon the traditional scientific paradigm of experimental manipulation through interventions, and observation of effects, followed by reflection to guide future change efforts. Similar to traditional science, action research is claimed to yield a set of general laws expressed in ‘if/so’ propositions, yet thereafter, the methodologies diverge (Peters & Robinson 1984). It is easy to see why action research is considered ‘gestaltist’ in nature, as the researcher approaches the subject in its natural state, observed as an entire system, rather than in a fragmented state. Action Research may begin with a ‘fuzzy’ understanding of a specific situation, and by engaging in an iterative cycle of plan, act, observe, reflect, and achieve greater clarity of understanding.

Traditional science, unlike action research, is exact in its measurement of cause and effect, action research can deal with vagueness and uncertainty, resolved through its repeated cycles. Traditional science also does not propose to proffer solutions to problems, whilst action research seeks to change a situation to a more desirable state through action and learning.
Gronhaug and Olsen (1999), citing Frankfort, Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) define ‘traditional research' as associated with ‘Objectivity' and emphasizing validity of research findings. The classical experiment serves as an ‘ideal', a research design often used as a baseline.

From my investigation of the literature on action research I understand some forms of action research (eg, participatory or participative or collaborative action research) also make the following additional claims as to its attributes:

- Participants treated as partners, not objects;
- Provides scope for emancipation of the repressed;
- Is capable of dealing with the entire system in its natural environment;
- Able to accommodate the reality of changing problems as the process engages;
- Provides observation and reflection to guide further change actions;
- Provides capacity for self diagnosis of problems, research skills learning and greater self-determination by participants; and
- Is distinguished from other forms of social research by the need for collaboration.

While most action researchers may find agreement in the core process of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, then planning further action, there are varied approaches that may be chosen from several methodologies.

Different types of action research considered by Dickens and Watkins (1999) include:

- **Professional expert model** – professional researcher studies a set of problems and recommends corrective action. The professional expert leads the process with little involvement from organization members.

- **Participatory Action Research** – all participants do the research themselves, and are involved in every stage of the Action Research cycles.

Masters (1995) then endeavours to summarise the approaches:

- **Technical/Technical–Collaborative/Scientific-Technical/Positivist** - A scientific method of problem solving, where the process involves testing a particular intervention based on a theoretical framework specified earlier. Collaboration between researcher and practitioners is technical and facilitatory. The approach results in the accumulation of predictive knowledge.

- **Mutual-Collaborative/Practical-Deliberative-Interpretivist Perspective** – In this approach, there is collaboration between the researcher and practitioner to identify potential problems, their underlying causes and possible interventions (Holter &
Schwartz-Barcott 1993, p. 301). It allows for a more flexible approach not afforded in the positivist perspective.

- **Enhancement Approach / Critical-Emancipatory Action Research / Critical Science Perspective** – this approach: promotes emancipatory praxis in the practitioners; that is, it promotes a critical consciousness which exhibits itself in political as well as practical action to promote change. (Grundy 1987, p. 154)

Masters (1995) concludes her paper *The History of Action Research* by detailing a useful comparative presentation of the three Action Research paradigms in tabular form as follows (see Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2 A comparison of the three Action Research paradigms (Masters 1995)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Technical Action Research</th>
<th>Mutual-Collaboration Action Research</th>
<th>Participatory Action Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophical Base</strong></td>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>Historical-hermeneutic</td>
<td>Critical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The nature of reality</strong></td>
<td>Single, measurable, fragmental</td>
<td>Multiple, constructed, holistic</td>
<td>Social, economic. Exists with problems of equity and hegemony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem</strong></td>
<td>Defined in advance</td>
<td>Defined in situation</td>
<td>Defined in the situation based on values clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship between the Knower and Known</strong></td>
<td>Separate</td>
<td>Interrelated, dialogic</td>
<td>Interrelated, embedded in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus of collaboration theory</strong></td>
<td>Technical validation, refinement, deduction</td>
<td>Mutual understanding, new theory, inductive</td>
<td>Mutual emancipation, validation, refinement, new theory, inductive, deductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Knowledge produced</strong></td>
<td>Predictive</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>Predictive, descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change duration</strong></td>
<td>Short lived</td>
<td>Longer lasting, dependent on individuals</td>
<td>Social change, emancipation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The nature of understanding</strong></td>
<td>Events explained in terms of real causes and simultaneous effects</td>
<td>Events are understood through active mental work, interactions with external context, transactions between one’s mental work and external context</td>
<td>Events are understood in terms of social and economic hindrances to true equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The role of value in research</strong></td>
<td>Value free</td>
<td>Value bounded</td>
<td>Related to values of equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of research</strong></td>
<td>Discovery of laws underlying reality</td>
<td>Understand what occurs and the meaning people make of phenomena</td>
<td>Uncover and understand what constrains equity and supports hegemony to free oneself of false consciousness and change practice towards more equity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Masters notes finally, relying on Grundy (1987, p. 363), that:

it is not in the methodologies that the three modes of action research differ, but rather in the underlying assumptions and worldviews of the participants that cause the variations in the application of the methodology.

In endeavouring to establish what action research is, Gronhaug and Olson (1999) using other authors to support their ideas, make reference to the detailed expression of six key elements of action research:

1. emphasises the importance of both scientific contributions and the solving of practical, real-life problems (even though this also often is the purpose of (much) traditional research, the research as such is frequently separated from future actions);
2. focuses on the common values and standards of researchers and clients (the value standards of researcher and clients – even though important – are usually not explicitly taken into account in ‘traditional’ research);
3. represents an intensive research strategy (which also may be the case, but need not necessarily be so in ‘traditional’ research);
4. involves some aspects of collaboration between researcher and client (which is paid almost no attention in prototypical, ‘traditional’ research, cf. (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996);
5. is longitudinal and emphasises gradual learning and improvements (even the learning aspect is crucial in ‘traditional’ research, very much of the research literature focuses on the single study. In ‘real-life’, however, the focus is often on longitudinal knowledge creation and learning); and
6. assumes that the researcher needs contact and interaction with clients to really know their problems and influencing factors (cf. ‘the total situation’). As such, this represents a deviance from the ‘traditional’, distant and ‘objective’ research ideal. This may also explain the strong anti-positivistic attitude reflected in very much of the Action Research literature. (For further discussion, see Peters and Robinson, 1984; Reason, 1994; Susman and Evered, 1978.)

An oversight of the various worldviews regarding action research allows the conclusion that the research method has been apparent under many other names. Participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning and contextual action research can reasonably be accommodated under the nomenclature of action research.

O’Brien (1998) simply defines action research as ‘learning by doing’, noting that people learn at their best, and show a greater propensity to apply what they have learnt, when they do it
themselves. And citing Winter (1989) in proposing that action research is provided its ‘unique flavour’ by six key principles.

1. **Reflexive Critique** – ensures that people reflect on issues and processes and clearly state the interpretations, biases, assumptions and concerns that form the basis of judgments;

2. **Dialectical Critique** – reality, including social reality, is shared through the form of language. Critical discussion and debate about individual theories, or comparing theories provide the rigour needed to optimise the selection of change actions;

3. **Collaborative Resource** – participants in Action Research are co-researchers. Each person’s ideas are of equal importance as potential resources for analysis. Participants are engaged to the process and encouraged to search for contradictions in the data presented;

4. **Risk** – participants may be cautious and conservative in truly expressing their views, fearing critical appraisal from others and the resultant wounding of ego. The researcher allays these fears by indicating that they also will be subject to the same process, and that it presents a fertile learning environment rather than a threat;

5. **Plural Structure** – the richness of research enables a multiplicity of views, commentaries and critiques, which lead to further critical considerations of a number of options for possible actions and interpretations by the group. This supports the cyclical process of Action Research;

6. **Theory, Practice, Transformation** – for participants in Action Research, theory informs practice and practice refines theory in a continuous transformation process. Actions are based on held assumptions, theories and hypotheses. As participants in the research reflect on the outcomes of the actions, their theoretical knowledge of what worked, or didn’t work and why, is enhanced. Theory and practice are entwined to ensure further actions are informed by the new theory established from reflection; (O'Brien 1998, p. 2)

In my research these 6 key principles are used: Reflexive critique, Dialectical Critique, Plural Structure, Theory Practice Transformation and Collaborative Resource & Risk. It became clear that minimal use of the two latter principles possibly affected the outcome.

O'Brien (1998) seeks to place action research within a research paradigm. He considers the positivist paradigm, interpretive paradigm and paradigm of praxis.

**Situating Action Research in a Research Paradigm**

- **Positivist Paradigm** – the main research paradigm principles used in the past, as well as now in the physical sciences, include a belief in objective reality. Knowledge of which can only be gained from data that can be directly experienced and verified
by independent observation. Phenomena are subject to natural laws, discovered in a logical manner using inductive and deductive hypotheses derived from scientific theory. Heavy reliance is placed on quantitative variances and relationships among variables are often shown by mathematical means (co-variance). Positivism as used in scientific and applied research is considered by many writers as the very antithesis of action research (Susman and Evered, 1978, Winter, 1989, as cited in O'Brien, 1998).

- **Interpretive Paradigm** – the last half-century has seen the dawning of a new era in social science research. Rather than carefully controlled experiments, this research paradigm places an emphasis on the relationship between socially – engendered concept formation and language. The interpretive paradigm contains qualitative methodological approaches such as phenomenology, ethnography, and hermeneutics. It is based on a belief in socially constructed, subjectively based reality which is influenced by culture and history. It does however still reflect the researcher as objective and independent collector and interpreter of data.

- **Paradigm of Praxis** – there are some researchers who believe that although action research has a number of similarities to the interpretive paradigm, and is inclined to the use of qualitative methodologies, neither it, nor the positivist paradigm, are suitable epistemological structures (enabling the study of what distinguishes true or adequate knowledge from false or inadequate knowledge) under which to position action research (Lather, 1986, Morley, 1991). The paradigm of praxis, introduces the term used by Aristotle, as the art of acting upon the conditions one faces in order to change them. Necessarily then, it deals with the disciplines and activities predominant in the ethical and political lives of people i.e. in ‘real life’ and in ‘real time’ situations. It also comes substantially from the principles discussed earlier, that theory and practice are intertwined, and each informs the other. Lastly, it dispenses with the notion of researcher neutrality, taking more of a pragmatic understanding that the most active researcher is the one who has most at stake in resolving a problem. This certainly strikes a chord with the purpose of my research subject.

O'Brien (1998, p. 11) also lends his views to the continuum of Action Research options available to the researcher. He notes that by the mid 1970's, the types of Action Research had evolved and revealed four main ‘streams’; traditional, contextual (action learning), radical, and educational action research. A brief reference is made to each as follows:

- **Traditional Action Research** – stemming from (Lewin 1946) original work, and incorporating concepts and practices of Field Theory, Group Dynamics, T-Groups,
and the Clinical Model. Tended towards the conservative approach, generally preserving the status quo of organizational power structures.

- **Contextual Action Research (Action Learning)** – derives from the work of Eric Trist, another major contributor to the field of Action Research from the post-war era. It entails the involvement of all affected parties and stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the Gestalt (entire system in its natural environment). All participants are involved in project design and as co-researchers. It is more of a liberal philosophy, with social transformation (theory and action) occurring through consensus and normative incrementalism.

- **Radical Action Research** – has its origins in Marxian ‘dialectical materialism’, with a strong focus on emancipation and the overcoming of power imbalances. Includes Participatory and Feminist Action Research, which both seek transformation through an advocacy process to strengthen perceptions and understandings of the issues promoted by these groups to achieve societal change.

- **Educational Action Research** – has its basis in the literature of Thomas Dewey, the American educational philosopher of the 1920s and 30s. Based on the tenet that professional educators should become involved in community problem solving, and focuses on development of curriculum, professional development, and applied learning in a social context. Operates mainly out of educational institutions.

My readings and understanding would tend to concur with O’Brien’s (1998) observation that action research is a holistic approach to problem solving, rather than a single method for collecting and analysing data. As such, it can accommodate the use of several different research methods as the project evolves. The methods, inclined to the qualitative research paradigm, may include: maintaining a research journal, document collection and analysis, participant observation recordings, questionnaire surveys, structured and unstructured interviews and case studies. There are numerous authors who posit their perspective on the types of action research. Other authors such as Hughes (2001, p. 3) talk upon three types of action research: scientific – technical view of problem solving; practical – deliberative action research; and critical – emancipatory action research. He relies heavily on the work of McKernan (1991) and Masters (1995) which I have previously discussed.

Tripp (1996, in Hughes 2001) does however contribute to my purpose in his perspective on action inquiry. He indicates that action research is one of a family that has some common features and is known as ‘action inquiry’. He states that other forms of action inquiry include: action learning, reflective practice, collaborative inquiry and continuous quality improvement. And while I consider action research embraces these other forms under its broad category, Hughes disagrees. He claims that research is but one form of inquiry, and that inquiry
properly includes any kind of investigation, knowledge seeking knowledge, or information gathering. Action inquiry he defines as ‘any process of seeking knowledge by doing something and reflecting on what happens’.

Hughes (2001) also puts forward the view that ‘we should avoid using the term ‘Action Research’ for a type of personal learning, which does not lead to publication or dissemination of results’. And that the use of action research in this manner ‘obscures a fundamental purpose of action research, which is to make social practices, and the values they embody, explicit and problematic.’

3.2 Why Action Research is appropriate for my research

In consideration of my research topic, I was engaged by the concept of Unbounded Systems Thinking (UST). To me, UST seems an appropriate inquiry system to the problems we are challenged by in the increasing complexity and interdependencies within organizations. I am attracted by the notion that UST does not give preferential consideration to the source of its information. Every source is considered equal.

Mitroff and Linstone (1993, p. 91) cited in Hiley (2000) ‘Importantly, it sits well with the view that the interdependencies involved in complex problems give reason for looking at the whole system’. The desirable approach is to have the whole action research group (practitioners) drive the improvement process. As Dickens and Watkins (1999, pp. 131-132) state, citing Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Brown et al (1982):

the goal of improvement is directed towards three areas; practice, the understanding of the practice by its practitioners, and the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place.

O’Brien (1998) offers encouragement in the approach I am pursuing:

Action Research is used in real situations, rather than in contrived, experimental studies, since its primary focus is on solving real problems. It can, however be used by social scientists for preliminary or pilot research, especially when the situation is too ambiguous to frame a precise research question. Mostly, though, in accordance with its principles, it is chosen when circumstances require flexibility, the involvement of the people in the research, or change must take place quickly or holistically.

If there is one definitive statement in my readings that succinctly encapsulates why I have chosen action research for my research project, then that is the above statement. It clearly
illustrates the practicality of action research when applied to fluid environments where any one of the elements may, apparently at random, impact on the outcome.

3.3 How I know that I am doing Action Research

The previous discussions provide substantial insight into action research. I also have regard to Master’s (1995, p. 3) consideration of Grundy and Kemmis (1981, as cited in Grundy) who list the ‘three minimal requirements for Action Research.’

These requirements incorporate the goals of improvement and involvement which characterise any Action Research project.

The conditions which they set out as individually necessary and jointly sufficient for Action Research to exist are:

1. the project takes as its subject-matter a social practice, regarding it as a strategic action susceptible to improvement;
2. the project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, with each of these activities being systematically and self-critically implemented and interrelated; and
3. the project involves those responsible for the practice in each of the movements of the activity, widening participating and maintaining collaborative control of the process.

Then, I refer to Gronhaug and Olson (1999) for a basis of testing that my research project is being undertaken using action research in its many forms. They cite a number of authors in detailing a list of six key indicators that action research is being undertaken. These indicators have been previously detailed in this section and to my mind, represent a good check list for ensuring a congruence with action research principles within my research project.

Cherry (1999, p. xiv) suggests that action research comprises three key strands:

- **Action** – which is making a useful and noticeable change;
- **Knowledge** – which is about how and why people and things work; and
- **Learning** – which is about enhancing the capability to do things in the future. A key element to achieving learning is structured reflection.

This investigation of the various views of action research identified a number of different methods by which it is used. It also positioned action research within different research paradigms. At this stage I did not know where the research would lead. However, it was my intention to undertake a collaborative investigation which would result in a change to the way
part-time contract managers carried out their tasks. To me, the Kemmis McTaggart model offered the closest method to achieve that aim.

3.4 Adapting the Kemmis McTaggart model

The Kemmis McTaggart model consists of a series of cycles arranged vertically, heading down the page. Each cycle requires a plan to be devised that is based on the previous reflection. Then it maps an action event which implements the plan, followed by observing the results of that action and documenting them. Finally there is a reflection by the participants on the data that was collected.

My first adaptation is that the action research cycles must go forward. The model I first saw had the arrows focusing downwards, which may be fine for its author but for me it is not positive. So my cycles go upwards and/or forwards. But don’t get confused; back is O.K. too, if its intention is a strategic move e.g. reflection that is leading to going forward. This may seem minor but to me it is an important mindset.

The second adaption in my research is that the reflection was not necessarily carried out by the same group each time, nor was it always by the participants. This was not an intended outcome rather the way the research occurred. The same participants were not always available. This was simply a practical limitation of the reality.

Already we are witnessing the vagaries of social change and interaction whereby there is no ‘right’ way for everything or, conversely, a wrong way. For me it is the maintenance of subtle, positive realism and not the salesman’s positiveness that quotes unachievable goals to sell snow to the Eskimos, but a determined realistic achievement. We are going to a destination that is better than where we are, but we don’t really know how we are going to get there or actually, where it is. What a journey!
The following diagram (Diagram 5) is adapted from a model in (Riding, Fowell & Levy 1995):

![Diagram of Action Research model](image)

**Figure 3.2** Action Research model

So if the above action research loops are applied across the project it would appear as a matrix of loops fanning out from the initial loop as in the following diagram.

![Matrix of Loops in a Project](image)

**Figure 3.3** Matrix of Loops in a Project (Strachan 2004)

Loops leading nowhere, loops duplicating other loops, loops leading to the same point and eventually the winding weaving path leading to a point that is an appropriate outcome for the process. Sometimes expected and more often one expects to find the unexpected.

The four moments of action research as described by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988, pp. 7-11) are:
1. **The plan**

   This must be prospective to the action and forward looking. It must recognise that all social interaction is unpredictable thus risky. There are two strategic aspects, firstly the risks to be considered recognising the real material and political constraints. Secondly strategic actions allow more prudent action over a wider range of circumstances. This allows the practitioner to follow an action to its conclusion without further reference to present constraints;

2. **The action**

   The action is deliberate and controlled. It is a thoughtful variation of current practice. Whilst the action is retrospectively guided by planning it looks to the planning for its rationale. Because it happens in real time it is exposed to real risks. There are three gains that should be paramount in a researcher’s mind during an action: Improvement of understanding, improvement of the situation in which the action takes place, and improvement of practice;

3. **The observation**

   The observation documents the effect of the action. It looks forward in that it provides the basis for a reflection. Observation is an essential part of the cycle because the action is always affected by the constraints of the researchers’ view of ‘reality’. Not all of these will be clear in advance thus the observation phase will provide the documentary basis for reflection; and

4. **The reflection**

   Reflection recalls action that is recorded in observation. It is intended to seek a sense of the processes and issues that arose during the action. Reflection usually occurs between the participants and will provide the basis for subsequent planning of the next cycle. Reflection looks at both the constraints of the environment that surrounded the action and then considers what might now be possible as a result of the active interaction.

Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) then describe the moments of action research in the following model:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.3 Moments of Action Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discourse (among participants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective on observation (reconnaissance and evaluation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospective to action (constructed Action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice (in the social context)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Observe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospective for reflection (documentation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective guidance from planning (deliberate and controlled strategic action)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In applying the theory I found that it is easy to miss steps. Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) actually caution against this, so I accept it is a common trap for practitioners to fall into - 'Familiarity breeds contempt' springs to mind as an apt description of what happens. I then found that when steps were missed and the process error was not realized, the tendency was just to try the same thing again. Doing it harder, that is, with more persistence and aggression; hoping a more acceptable result would be forthcoming. Therefore, if I now identify failures in my process I try and return to fix the process. Reminding myself that ‘if I always do what I’ve always done, I will always get what I’ve always got!’

3.5 Other research methods that were employed

Whilst I have classified this project as being principally action research there are a number of other research methods that are nested within the action research loops.

These methods are:

3.5.1 Semi-structured or focused interviews

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (in Collis & Hussey 2003) consider unstructured or semi-structured interviews are an appropriate method when:

- It is necessary to understand the construct that the interviewee uses as a basis for his or her opinions and beliefs about a particular matter or situation;
- One aim of the interview is to develop an understanding if the respondent’s ‘world’ is that the researcher might influence it, either independently or collaboratively (as might be the case with action research);
- The step by step logic of a situation is not clear;
- The subject matter is highly confidential or commercially sensitive; and
- The interviewee may be reluctant to be truthful about this issue other than confidentially in a one to one situation.

The interviews that I conducted were semi-structured in that I designed a series of specific open questions to ask each informant. This was to guide each interview along the same path of inquiry.

Because I am an insider researcher, but one who was relatively new to the university, I was able to provide a different insight to the operation from long-term employees. The interviews enabled me to understand from the participants’ point of view how they viewed the organization, its attributes and deficiencies. Several of these people had spent almost all their career in the same or similar organizations.
Furthermore the interviews enabled me to identify consistent trends and also discontinuities between groups of people. For example a key theme across all the university's employees, when asked for a metaphor to describe the culture, was that it is ‘like a day at the beach, lots of people in isolated groups just playing and enjoying themselves with little regard for others’. An example of a discontinuity between groups was that the university employee group considered themselves to be the ‘best in class’ when compared with contract management at other educational establishments. However, contract suppliers considered the university’s level of contract management to be quite poor when compared with other organizations to which they were contracted. Obviously both statements may well be true but the inference is that the university's employees are not expecting to improve themselves and the suppliers perceive a need for improvement. Appendix 1 contains the letter inviting participants to engage with the research.

3.5.2 Training
Training was used to first identify the contract management proficiency level of a cohort of prospective contract managers within the university. It was then extrapolated further as an action research cycle to bring the cohort to a similar proficiency level and to introduce them to the way other organizations than educational establishments performed contract management. It also provided me with the opportunity to talk in an unstructured way with this cohort to understand the difficulties they were experiencing.

I also participated in a series of seminars around Australia entitled ‘Contracts – 2006’. Whilst I was delivering training material that the wider industry considered was beneficial the additional purpose for me was to find out what the participants believed was a gap in wider industries contract management skills.

My reflections from these activities led me to consider a case study from work I had completed some years before.

3.5.3 Case Study
Some years ago I was the leader of a major change management initiative for a government organization that was being readied for sale to the private sector. It was considered a ‘non-core government business’. The business consisted of around 120 people and had been losing more than ten percent of revenue for many years. At my initial introduction to the leadership team I generally said that I didn’t know what our journey was going to be like but that we would have fun and make money for the company! This caused concern for several members of my public service team but their fears were allayed over subsequent weeks.
when I made use of a very large whiteboard in my office/meeting room. I am a visual person and I used this board to outline the structure of the proposed organization. But this was only a starting point. I then encouraged the team to just come in at any time and make changes or discuss why what was there was so and so forth. The result was that in the space of about nine months we turned the business around from making a significant loss to making a profit and absorbing another similarly poorly performing service centre that consisted of about 90 people.

My reflection, following literature research, enabled me to realize that I had actually undertaken a form of group Organisational Role Analysis (ORA) to achieve a successful change. Thus the next action research cycle should be the application of ORA to the university.

3.5.4 Organizational Role Analysis

When I was reviewing literature for my doctoral candidature I resonated with Irving Borwick’s concept of Organizational Role Analysis (ORA) (Newton, Long & Sievers 2006). It appeared to me that I had used a similar collaborative method to achieve the successful results in the case study above. Thus it was a logical research method to use in this project. It had worked then when I didn’t really know about ORA, so it would be useful to understand better how it works or perhaps why it works. I had half expected that would be the conclusion of a successful project and that everyone would live happily ever after! But that is not the nature of research. The ORA was not wholly successful. This was due to a number of reasons, not the least being that I moved from an insider to an outsider researcher. Consequently the major part of this research developed a working hypothesis. The working hypothesis had regard for why this ORA group discussion failed to meet my expectations, but why an attempt in the case study worked so well that it surprised many participants and observers. It then uses an adaptation of the Grubb Institutes System/Role/Person/Context having regards to Krantz (1998, p. 79)

My intention is to extend the idea that people create strategic advantages into the unconscious realm by arguing that the success of New Order Organizations is deeply connected to the ways they develop to contain anxiety.

My analysis reveals the transient, almost amoebic like, nature of a complex organizations boundaries and the need to understand and adequately contain unconscious anxieties in all the organizations members.
3.5.5 A Critique of the Research Strategy

In the foregoing sections I have described the individual methodologies that I used in the research. It is appropriate that I should now describe the integrated methodology as it occurred. I say ‘as it occurred’ because at the outset I could only visualise that the process would be one of action research as an umbrella methodology and there would be a number of other research methods used in the iterations. What they would be and how they would be used I had no idea. That is the nature of a research methodology like action research. It is messy because it is iterative. It may travel paths that contribute nothing to the research or perhaps only a little. Then it will travel paths that are used entirely in the research. I shall not discuss why the particular methodologies were used, that emerges in other parts of this thesis in their correct contexts.

As I have previously mentioned the research in total sat underneath an umbrella of action research methodology.

The first methodology used to obtain data was the training of current and prospective contract managers. This was undertaken partly as an insider researcher and partly as an outside researcher. This complexity arose because both the trainees and myself were employees of the university but I was engaged by a different department to the trainees and there was no reporting line to me from the trainees.

Training was followed with semi structured interviews undertaken as an insider researcher. While there was a potential for a complexity to arise, as with the training phase, it did not appear as an issue. By the time of the interviews both the interviewees and I were working collaboratively towards a discovery of the nature of contract management within the university.

The state of the wider industry was then ascertained by presenting papers and posing questions to a nationwide population of practitioners: effectively an unstructured group interview. But it had the added benefit that only those interested in the subject matter would respond. That is they were informed advisors facing the same dilemma as the researcher.

Organizational role analysis (ORA) was then used as both a research methodology and a potential solution to the research question. It was conducted in part as an insider researcher and also as an outsider researcher.
The ORA gave rise to a case study review. The case study review did not rely on rigorous application of the methodology. That would properly be expected if the research were based solely on that methodology. However, I consider it is appropriate to consider this phase of the research as a case study review.

The performance interview was important because it acted as a catalyst to identify one of the key pillars which formed the outcomes from the research – the paralysis of a person’s normal conduct through uncontained anxiety.

Therefore, visually, the research methodology appeared as follows:

![Overall Research Methodology Diagram](image)

**Figure 3.4 Overall Research Methodology Diagram**

The strategy of integrating different methodologies into an overall research methodology clearly encompasses the individual strengths and weaknesses of each method. However, what is important to consider are the additional strengths and weaknesses that result from
the integrated methodology. I shall now discuss overall strengths and weaknesses and the implementation of the strategy.

The primary strength is that with the overall umbrella of action research, particularly from an insider view point, the researcher becomes immersed in the subject. If the work had been carried out as independent or uninvolved third person many of the nuances that became evident during reflection may have been lost. Thus, because the researcher was fully immersed it would have been impossible to undertake it as positivistic research. This is further evident with the emotional attachment that developed between the subject matter, the participants and the researcher. Positivistic research demands a ‘distance’ between the researcher and that being researched and the collation quantifiable data. Phenomenological research requires the researcher to expose themselves to the emotions within the human system being researched. It is anxiety provoking, messy and anything but certain with regards the outcomes.

Similarly the researcher’s position as an insider researcher, initially, was a strength because the political environment and the emotional nuances were identified through unexpected behaviour. Such as the participant who vacillated between participating and not participating. He then confirmed many years later that he was swayed by a fear of what could happen rather than what was happening. Later, my move to an outsider researcher role is likely to have caused the process of Organizational Role Analysis to falter because the research was no longer to benefit the participants but in their view was only being done ‘for Stuart’s research’.

Another significant advantage of both insider and action research is that the researcher witnesses first-hand the necessary involvement and frustration when the outcomes are not as expected. This then triggers further research.

The implementation strategy was quite straight forward. It started with a single action research iteration that built upon my ideas from past education that personality might be a key to solving the dilemma of the research question. But this was then dispensed with because it was considered that changing a role would serve the purpose of change more effectively than attempting to change personality. Role is a systemic concept. Also, it is not feasible to try and recruit only people with a particular personality profile to the requisite roles. However, it may be possible to give, take and make roles in different ways. Action research enabled this flexibility and also allowed the incorporation of a vast array of information I had gained experientially through my career and life.
One of the principal limitations is that at the outset it is not clear what needs to be done to find the right solution. Quantifiable research generally suggests the data that needs to be collected to derive the solution. The solution is usually unknown but the data on which to develop the solution is usually identified at the outset. In comparison with Action Research it is clean, tidy and does not use emotions of the researcher as data. The very issues that human research needs to identify.
Chapter 4 – An introduction to the research

This research used action research methodology as the umbrella method. I was particularly attracted to the following diagram (Diagram 4.1) as a clear description of the action research methodology described by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). It is adapted from a model in Riding, Fowell and Levy (1995):

![Diagram 4.1 - Action Research model](image)

**Figure 4.1** Action Research model

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) suggest there are four moments of action research. I have arranged this thesis to reflect the structure of action research loops. However, in order to understand why I elected to take a particular action each plan, action, observation and reflection loop reported here is preceded with a short statement about the knowledge that informed that loop. Some of that knowledge also included my appreciation of some things that I did not know but needed to know.

### 4.1 The start

It would be convenient if the research commenced with a plan because that would fit nicely into the model. But the reality is that it didn’t. In my case I started with a problem – the failure of the contract management process to deliver the intended results when it was executed by part-time contract managers. I eventually surmised, as I clarified my research question, that it may be to do with the way contracts were implemented in the particular organization in which I was working.
After a considerable amount of time I eventually composed a research question. This was neither a plan nor an action. Perhaps it was an observation about what was happening in industry. It was certainly not an observation about the results of an action as I had not yet commenced formal action research. However, at this point there was a significant amount of reflection on my own experience and the experience of others through their literature. In fact it was probably really a reflection on where my career had twisted and turned so far. It was the precursor of the ‘Planning’ step in an action research loop. For this reason, because this will introduce the reader to my experience and skills, I shall briefly provide some background.

My working career commenced as a project manager within a small mechanical services contractor which tended to specialize in hospital buildings. Mechanical services are the equipment and systems which provide services such as hotwater, steam, airconditioning and other fluids which are piped throughout the fabric of a building to produce a comfortable environment. These are complex engineering systems that at particularly critical times can be a matter of life or death. From this point I moved on to work for some ten years as the assistant engineer at a large regional hospital. As the assistant engineer I was responsible for the daily coordination of a group of multi-skilled tradesmen who maintained the entire hospital buildings and engineering systems. This was the start of my management career. As my career progressed I assumed increasingly senior management roles. Then, as part of my continuing professional development, I was introduced to the motivational models of Taylor, Herzberg, Maslow and McGregor (Bradshaw 1986). It was this exposure that made me realize there was more to human management than just ‘tell them what to do’. Even though I had developed through a very positivist environment of engineered machines I appreciated that people are not like that. People do not respond to ‘nipping up a bolt’ or ‘just a little grease, will do it’. But perhaps there is an equivalent non-physical and intangible attention that serves a similar purpose for people? Similarly, I felt that the footy coach’s approach of ‘just give ’em a dose of motivation’ was not a long term solution.

Some fifteen years later, when I undertook a masters degree, I became increasingly aware of the power of unconscious motivation. If this could be at least a little understood, then perhaps a solution to the issue of failures in the contract management process could be achieved. Consequently this research commenced with an engineering manager reflecting on his managerial practice and then initially researching literature in an attempt to understand the behaviour of people from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

In my journey both the research and my learning was an iterative process. As I have briefly already outlined, in a career spanning nearly forty years I have acquired some knowledge.
But while my knowledge regarding peoples’ motivations in the role of an engineering manager is quite good, my knowledge of peoples’ unconscious motivations in the context of group relations and systems psychodynamics is very low. Hence with action research I expect my knowledge and learning will progressively develop from both the research actions and my own literature research. Thus it is appropriate to progressively analyze and quantify my learning and knowledge as I recount my journey of exploration.

Once all the actions of the research are complete it will be appropriate for me to reflect holistically on the research, what occurred and what it means. I will also reflect on knowledge that I have developed throughout my career but which I may not currently comprehend as knowledge. I may even research the literature a little more at that stage to better understand the meaning of my observations. This will occur in Chapters twelve and thirteen. Finally I shall reflect on the context of the research as it actually happened rather than initially anticipated and then what the next steps may be. This is important as it will provide some background to the inevitable unconscious dynamics that I have exhibited and no doubt also been exposed to by both research participants and others in my wider life.

4.2 Current Literature
The next step in determining the need for this research was to establish what has already been undertaken by other researchers in this area, particularly in the contract management environment. Initially this was in respect to personality profiling and then when this was discounted, in respect to the intersection of systems psychodynamics, contract management and the university sector as an overall environment.

4.2.1 Personality Profiling
There is a large amount of literature on personality profiling. Had I continued with this consideration then this thesis would have had a stronger focus on the application of existing theory. Because I moved comparatively rapidly to a systems psychodynamics approach I will not detail the extent of the investigation into personality profiling.

4.2.2 Systems psychodynamics
The core of the research revolves around the intersection of systems psychodynamics with contract management in a university environment. Systems psychodynamics is a comparatively new branch of the psychoanalytic tradition. Gould, Stapley and Stein (2001) credit Miller and Rice (1967) with its creation although the term does not appear to have been used until 1999 in 'Systems Psychodynamics in the Service of Political Organizational Change'
(Neumann 1999). Thus, in 2005, when I commenced my literature review, it was unlikely for systems psychodynamics to have been associated with contract management. Consequently I reviewed the three aspects of systems psychodynamics which influence its practice as it was more likely that these aspects may have been considered by previous researchers. They are psychoanalysis, group relations and task and boundary effects on human systems.

4.2.3 Contract Management
Contract management is a term which encompasses a number of similar terms such as project management, project administration and contract administration. These disciplines are generally associated with control of activities in both ‘soft’ human activities or ‘hard’ quantifiable activities such as construction work. Consequently I looked for applicable literature which was classified under any of these terms.

4.2.4 The university environment
The university environment is very complex. It covers a wide range of disciplines in terms of its core business of teaching and learning and an equally wide range of disciplines in terms of its business support services. I was working in a support services department which was responsible for driving change initiatives across the university. Therefore, I was aware that there was no coordinated application of contract management practices across the university. The change initiatives that were associated with contract management used traditional practice which had evolved from construction and maintenance environments. That is contract management consisted of a series of processes that were taught to prospective contract managers. The closest this environment got to intersecting with systems psychodynamics practice was the consideration of personality type theory and motivational theory. While both of these theories stem from psychoanalysis they make little contribution to systems psychodynamics. Therefore, through my day to day work I was aware that there was little knowledge of the new concept of systems psychodynamics in this area.

4.2.5 The intersection of systems psychodynamics with contract management
My research for current literature was extensive. I consulted more than 120 articles and books which considered contract management or its variants and a further 340 articles and books which considered aspects of systems psychodynamics. Not only did I look for scholarly articles about systems
psychodynamics and contract management but I also sought anecdotal and sub professional contributions that may infer the intersection I was seeking. I did not find any articles that dealt specifically with the systems psychodynamics of contract management. One particular article (Schwartz 1987), did consider the systems psychodynamics effects of a principal's behaviour on a group of subcontractors. But it did not consider how systems psychodynamics may have affected the implementation of a contract. I then considered the aspects of systems psychodynamics and later the change triumvirate of organizational role, culture and structure. There is considerable literature surrounding culture and how it may affect organizations. Similarly there is extensive literature regarding organizational structure, particularly in the vein of Taylorist management theory but significantly less when structure is viewed psychoanalytically. Organizational role, too, is increasingly being considered an important aspect to organizational success and there is some literature about the application of role analysis. However, in the application of systems psychodynamics theory or its elements to a population of contract managers I found nothing. As my research progressed and encompassed the notion of two roles intersecting each other, I found nothing in either scholarly literature or other literature.

Within contract management literature, the closest I found to there being an acknowledgement that there is an aspect to contract management, hitherto not understood, was Crawford (2000). This paper advised the extent of current processes, knowledge and practice do not provide any certain correlation between knowledge and practice. However, it did not explore what that missing link may be. Because the research was not focused on the process of contract management I concluded there was a clear gap in current literature.

4.2 Underlying theory

Action research is, by its nature, a ‘messy’ process. One doesn't know where it will go. Sometimes it will identify issues and solutions that are irrelevant to the principal research. In this research I started with a problem and by reflecting on my knowledge to date proposed a course of action that would commence with personality profiling. However, my reading and further coursework influenced me to consider other theoretical bases. These have been included in this thesis when used to inform an action research iteration. This is reasonably logical but does not reflect the reality of when I first became aware of them. Thus for a reader to have some understanding as to why I would decide to base an action research cycle on a particular theory, I will here present an overview of the theories I have used in this research.
4.2.1 Personality profiling

Although I did not use personality profiling in this research I originally intended to commence my research by using it and it informed my early thinking. Therefore it is appropriate to provide a brief overview of some personality theories.

Personality may be defined as:

A dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person who uniquely influences his or her cognitions, emotions, interpersonal orientations motivations, and behaviors in various situations. (Shields 2011, p. 3)

There are many different personality theories and the key theories I initially considered may be classified into:

- **Type theory**
  Type theories classify people according to a psychological type. These theories originate from the work of Carl Jung. Jung was a founder of analytical psychology. Jung differed from Freud's psychological theory of the unconscious in that Jung believed there is another deeper unconscious which he termed the collective unconscious and is the home of archetypes. Archetypes are the psychic equivalent to a person's instincts.

- **Psychoanalytic theory**
  Sigmund Freud was the founder of this theory. He coined the term psychoanalysis to describe his work. Within psychoanalytic theory unconscious psychological conflicts are regarded as the source of peoples' behaviours.

The above is a very simplistic overview. But, because I quickly moved from thinking about individual personality profiling to thinking about collective behaviour it is sufficient for this thesis. It became apparent to me that people were affected by the nature of the systems that they worked within and that these systems themselves had unconscious dynamics.

4.2.2 Systems Psychodynamics

This section briefly introduces some concepts of Systems Psychodynamics. Systems Psychodynamics is an amalgam of psychoanalytical, group relations and open systems theories. It is a term that originated from the Tavistock Institute to describe its work in the area of group and organizational processes. The psychoanalytical aspect stems from Sigmund Freud’s study of individuals in the late 19th century. In the 20th century Wilfred Bion (1961) used the work of the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1940, 1946) to develop a theory
about group culture. Open systems theory developed after the Second World War utilizing the work of Bion.

Systems Psychodynamics concepts contain a number of ideas that I have used to gain an understanding about human behaviour in the context of part-time contract managers. The aspects I have considered are outlined as follows:

**Basic Assumptions**

The Tavistock Institute's concept of group behaviour is based on the work of Wilfred Bion (1961). He proposed that within a group there are two types of behaviour. That of a functional work group focused on the requisite task and basic assumption behaviour focused on defending against the anxieties inherent in group life. During basic assumption behaviour the group acts defensively rather than logically in a functional manner. Bion identified three basic assumption cultures in the group. (Bion 1961, p. 150) They are dependency, pairing and fight or flight. Since Bion's initial work other researchers have identified other basic assumptions such as Turquet’a (1974) belief in ‘One-ness’ and Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1996) who identified ‘Me-ness’.

**Anxiety**

Obholzer (1994) identified three layers of anxiety:

1. Primitive anxiety which exists in everyone;
2. Work anxieties that prevent the execution of the primary work task because the members arrange work to defend themselves against the anxiety that the work creates. These are exacerbated when personal or primitive anxieties are prompted at a conscious or unconscious level; and
3. Personal anxieties that consist of prior events which a person has experienced and are triggered by a current incident.

People engage a variety of defenses to protect themselves from anxiety as individuals or collectively as in the case of social defenses.

**Boundaries**

The idea of a boundary is a basic concept from the psychoanalytic school (James & Huffington 2004). Fundamentally, it is a construct in the mind rather than a physical barrier. At an organizational level boundaries demark different organizational structures such as departments and roles. They also demark cultural differences within organizational behaviours such as different perceptions or values held by different groups. Individuals may or may not be aware of when they are transgressed.
Authority
Czander (1993) advises that authority influences the type of structure an organization adopts. He further adviser that power and authority are frequently assumed to be the same. Authority usually pertains to the official power held in a role, whereas power may be gained through illegitimate means and may involve rewards or coercion. Power is basically influence, while authority is legitimate influence gained through the group or roles within the group (Long 1992).

Containment
Bion (in Gabriel 1999) is attributed with developing the concept of containment. Gabriel (1999) further relates the concept of containment to Winnicott’s idea of a holding environment that serves to contain anxiety. Containment (developed from the idea of a container) refers to the capacity to hold anxiety rather than to ‘act-out’ or expunge the anxiety in other ways. For example a superior may contain the anxiety of a subordinate by taking responsibility for the subordinate's concerns.

Representation
A person may represent his or her group either consciously through being authorized to do so, or unconsciously through the perceptions of others about his or her representation. When a member or members of a group are authorized to cross a system boundary they are then representing their organization to the other organization. By crossing this boundary it is likely that anxiety will occur in either the representative or others or both. The anxiety may be assuaged by either restructuring the boundaries or making them more rigid and defined.

4.2.3 Role Theory
Role theory (Czander 1993) explores how roles are formed within systems and how individuals come to act within roles. It encompasses descriptions of the two activities of taking and giving roles. A role determines how a person is both expected to behave (the role as given) and how the person adopting the role actually behaves (the role as taken). Clearly there can be a gap or difference in understanding between these two viewpoints. This difference may be either conscious and deliberate or unconscious. Taking up a role will cause anxiety and defending against this anxiety is usually the cause of the difference in understanding. (Krantz & Maltz 1997, p. 139) suggest:

Appreciating the concept of role enables us to see where the person and system meet. From this vantage point, we can think about the person in context and the interrelation between the two. (Person and system)
How a person manages themselves in a role will determine the extent to which they exercise the authority that is endowed by the role and the extent to which they allow others with whom they interact, to assume authority outside the role.

Reed and Bazalgette (in Newton, Long & Sievers 2006, p. 45) advise:

A role in our thinking is a mental regulating principle, based on a person's lived experience of the complex interaction of feelings, ideas, and motivations, aroused in working to the aim of a system (which is itself an internal object to the person), integrated consciously and unconsciously and expressed in purposive behaviour.

Reed and Bazalgette (2006) continue to consider the common use of the term role as prescriptive and static, thus giving a clear delineation between role and person. However, because the role environment is continually changing the role, too, is a dynamic construct. The person taking the role will adapt the role to their own perception of the situation at that time.

Borwick (in Newton, Long & Sievers 2006) emphasizes that role is an important concept in change because it enables a move away from focusing on character to focusing on role in the context of an entire system/person model. It also facilitates the better understanding of the abstract nature of systems. This concept then leads to the idea of Organizational Role Analysis (ORA) which is also known as Organizational Role Consultation.

ORA is a method that is presently evolving to assist in the understanding how a role is used within an organizational context. Long, Newton and Chapman (in Newton, Long & Sievers 2006, p. 99) suggest:

This is no simple cognitive exercise. Not only is the role idea explored, but also the way in which the role holder comes to hold significant emotional roles within the organizational system, and the way the emotional experience of a role has become internally organized as part of what we term the 'organization-in-experience' (Long, Newton, & Dalgleish, 2000). Real discovery and learning emerges with a willingness to recover emotional, social and cognitive meanings within the role and its tasks.

4.2.4 Social Defences and Anxiety

Social Defence theory was first formulated by Jaques (1955) and further elaborated by Menzies-Lyth (1970). Its key concept is:

That a social system through unconscious processes and phantasy produces a culture and structures whereby the individuals in the system are defended against psychotic anxieties. (Long 2006, p. 4)
This theory is of particular application to the roles of part-time contract managers and why the complex role they are required to take up eventually fails.

### 4.2.5 Organizational culture

Schein (in Novak & Fine 1996, p. 2) defines organizational culture as:

> A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to think and feel in relation to those problems.

The work of Novak and Fine (1996) illustrates that culture is not necessarily a single culture for an entire organization. It may well be that a large organization has a corporately espoused culture that employees subscribe at one level. However, when they are part of a smaller group in the same organization the culture of the smaller group may be at odds with the corporate culture. In the context of this research culture at the corporate level may have one set of values. The principal group to which a part-time contract manager belongs may have another set of values, some congruent and some not. Then a third group, say Financial Services which expects a certain level of performance from the contract manager, may have yet another set of values which may be in conflict with both the former groups.

### 4.3 Conclusion

These are the theoretical concepts upon which the research is based. They were not all understood at the outset but as has been stated, action research is a ‘messy’ process. As one proceeds so the need to consider things ‘from outside the square’ becomes apparent. Hence, I started with a consideration of personality theory. But when that did not explain what I found was occurring I considered alternative explanations. The result is a raft of different theories which had their place, at the time.

The next chapter explains the first action research iteration.
Chapter 5 – The First Iteration
Skills gap analysis and training (part one)

5.1 Knowledge

At the commencement of my research journey I was aware I knew little about the psychodynamics of people and/or groups. I had previously been exposed to the concept of establishing teams taking into account the personality profiles of the team members; I also considered that personality profiling may offer a solution to my quest. However, as a result of reading Krantz (1998) I needed to educate myself more about the origins and basis of systems psychodynamics, how it is presently applied and/or understood as well as improve my understanding about personality profiling and identify if it was likely to provide the solutions I sought. What I did know was that I wanted to capture people's unconscious motivators, that I intuitively believed were present, even though at this point I didn’t know what they were or how to apply them.

I was responsible within my workplace for developing the contract management skills of people who would be managing contracts to provide non-core services. These included, for example, academic heads of departments and administrative staff. In most cases these people had neither previously managed contractors nor had they been exposed to contracts. Thus they generally lacked skills in this area. There is a need to develop these skills to a level such that the prospective managers would understand the obligations of contractors as well as the client and to be able to review and monitor the services that were delivered by the contracts.

I was also aware that this particular loop of research is messy! It consists of two simultaneous activities – doing something that may not seem directly relevant to the research but is necessary to ensure that prospective contract managers have a minimum skill level that would enable them to undertake the task; while I learn about systems psychodynamics, personality profiling and other unconscious psychological motivators.

5.2 The plan

1. Skills Gap Analysis and Training - Identify suitable training courses and arrange for future contract managers to attend.
2. Literature Research - commence researching literature about personality, systems psychodynamics and culture.
5.3 The action

1. Skills gap analysis and training

Review publicly advertised training courses and enable prospective contract managers to attend suitable training. Particularly focus on the idea that proposed contract managers will only be undertaking contract management as a small part of their work task. Courses for full-time contract managers may cover too much subject matter for the contract management role that is envisaged. For a person who is new to contract management and will only have it as a minor part of their work, the time required to complete a course would not be economic.

2. Literature research

Commence researching literature about systems psychodynamics and its origins, the effect of anxiety in the context of Krantz (1998), personality profiling as described by Myers Briggs (1998) and organizational culture as described by Schein (1996).

5.4 The Observations

5.4.1 Skills gap analysis and training

A review of available contract management training courses did reveal that most courses assumed a contract manager would be engaged full time on contract management. This would not be the case at the university as contract management would only be a small part of the position. This review of available courses continued from January 2005 until the end of 2008. Therefore the reflections are supported by this extended period of observation.

Because training courses assumed that contract management was a principal role they tended to consider the legal aspects of setting up a contract and then the legal options of enforcing or even cancelling non performing contracts. The courses also produced templates that would enable a prospective contract manager to put in place a structure by which to they could say the contract had been managed. For example some of the topics in the Lexis Nexis Contracts 2006 Sydney conference were:

- Structuring and Planning as Key Tools in the Contract Administration Function;
- The insurance Clause- A Practical Perspective to ease the onerous responsibilities of the contract Management Role;
- Drafting and Effecting the Best Alternate Dispute Resolution Clause – The Dispute Resolvers Perspective; and
- Reviewing the Contractual Relationship- Renew Replace or Terminate?

Such courses were not suitable for the part-time contract managers who were the subject of this research.
A course conducted by Procurement and Contracting Centre for Education and Research (2005) and entitled ‘Service Contract Management’ was designed to address one of the competencies required for Procurement and Contract Management in the Public Service Education and Training standards adopted by the Victorian Government. It advised that the workshop:

- Focuses on highly developed theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply solutions to service contract management requirements;
- Enables you to establish a contract management strategy;
- Enables you to monitor and maintain the performance of a contract; and
- Enables you to complete contracts and implement a contracts review strategy.

To test the practical application of this course a number of contract managers who had contract management as a significant part of their work task attended, including my immediate manager and me. At the conclusion of the course my manager, some of the other attendees and I reviewed its suitability and considered that while this course would be of interest it was too extensive thus time consuming for a contract manager with a low percentage of their work task involved with contract management.

5.5 Reflection

I am a believer that commercially available goods or services are generally more effective than bespoke goods and services because they capitalize on the experiences of general industry and provide what the market usually wants. This usually combines optimal effectiveness of the product with optimal cost.

Having said that it would appear that industry has not moved to the position that the university had adopted with a flat managerial structure that required people to undertake contract management as a non core task of their usual work tasks. This aspect of contract management did not require contract managers to be skilled at writing contracts, evaluating service delivery strategies, tendering or selecting contractors. Whilst the contract manager was included in all these activities they were not required to understand all the intricacies of these tasks.

In discussion with my manager it was decided that part of my work should include the development of a bespoke training course for the university's employees only. This course would have regard to the other parts of the overall contract management model we had adopted and how other sections of the university, such as Legal Services, Financial Services
and Strategic Sourcing & Procurement were integrated into the model. This gave rise to the Second Iteration – Skills Gap Analysis and Training Part Two.

5.6 Literature research

The initial literature research investigated three particular interests:

1. Personality profiling and the need for personalities to suit work tasks;
2. Organizational culture and its effect on the performance of the organization; and

5.6.1 Personality profiling

During my career, from time to time I had been exposed to personality profiling both as a user and as a subject. I have found that the results from these tests were generally consistent over time. I think I was also somewhat in awe that a series of apparently unrelated questions can comparatively quickly summarize how a person will feel about a particular work task! Thus I considered that personality profiling may provide an understanding of the unconscious motivations of people.

As part of my Masters degree I had been introduced to the concept of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator as a means of understanding the underlying personality profile that guided how people may be motivated. I thought that there may be an opportunity to select contract managers on the basis of their personality type if it were found that successful contract managers tended to have a particular personality type. However, as the university organizational structure was flattened and reduced in numbers there was a clear need for people to take on a number of work tasks that were firstly not core to their principal task and for which they may well not be suited to in terms of their personality. For example the Myers Briggs system of classification provides for sixteen different personality types which are comprised of four distinct traits. Therefore in the context of the university's contract manager model it would be quite possible for a person classified as an ENFP whose personality preference is:

Warmly enthusiastic and imaginative. See life as full of possibilities. Make connections between events and information very quickly, and confidently proceed based on the patterns they see. Want a lot of affirmation from others, and readily give appreciation and support. Spontaneous and flexible, often rely on their ability to improvise and their verbal fluency (Myers Briggs 1998, p. 10)

to be required to undertake contract management activities. Then, if it was found that the preferable personality profile for a contract management was an ISTJ, that is a person who:
Quiet, Serious, earn success by thoroughness and dependability. Practical, matter-of-fact, realistic, and responsible. Decide logically what should be done and work toward it steadily, regardless of distractions. Take pleasure in making everything orderly and organized – their work, their home, their life. Value traditions and loyalty (Myers Briggs 1998, p. 10)

then it may be an insurmountable task to motivate this person to satisfactorily discharge their duties as a contract manager by using their personality attributes.

I consequently developed a working hypothesis that while personality profiling may be useful in evaluating the suitability of a person for their principal role it would not necessarily provide the insight into unconscious motivation to undertake non-core work tasks that people were being required to undertake in this new age of flattened management structures and multi-skilling.

I was further influenced not to pursue this avenue of research further as I was concurrently gaining a better understanding of culture, systems psychodynamics and more particularly role theory.

5.6.2 Organizational culture

Czander (1993, p. 254) states that "Organizational Culture" is a difficult concept to capture:

The culture of the organization, referred to here as its psychosocial climate, is an ambiguous concept. It is largely concerned with the employees feeling state.

He then continues to describe how it may be identified and raises the notion that an organization, although an idea in the mind rather than a more simply understood physical presence, also projects an important, often unconscious presence. ‘The perception one obtains is a function of both the physical presence projected by the organization and that which is projected by the people employed’ (Schein 1996, p. 61) led me to also consider systems psychodynamics when he advised:

Similarly changing reward systems and status allocation systems in the internal working of the organization may be difficult because such changes will affect how work is done and how well goals are achieved. For this reason organizational analysis is increasingly moving toward what has been termed sociotechnical system analysis, acknowledging the degree to which the formal technical means for task accomplishment are intrinsically intertwined with the internal status, turf, and role systems.
Schein (1996) continued leading me to consider the effect of group dynamics with his observation ‘Cultural dynamics are ultimately a reflection of group dynamics’. At this point I was considering that organizational culture may be a key issue to address. Perhaps the organization would need to develop a culture which would influence contract managers to continue the contract management task over the longer term. This led me to also research systems psychodynamics.

5.6.3 Systems Psychodynamics

A systems psychodynamics approach to work derives from psychoanalytical theory:

From a psychoanalytic perspective, attachment to work is considered the result of the gratification of conscious and unconscious fantasies associated with occupational and career aspirations. (Czander 1993, p. 7)

Czander (1993) contrasts this with the traditional view that man is motivated by financial benefits and must be managed. The organization and sub groups within it are seen as systems of intangibles that are a complex set of social relations. These social systems also take on their own identity that does not represent any single one of the people that comprise the group. I began to discern that the ability of groups to take on their own identity may be particularly important in relation to why the contract management process fails after a period of time. It is worthwhile noting that even though a contract manager is an individual he is also a clear member of at least one work group or perhaps more than one.

A further aspect is Krantz's hypothesis that organizations can have a competitive advantage by affecting people’s ability to maintain and integrate, realistic psychological connection to their environment. Krantz (1998, p. 80) further suggests:

The starting point for exploring this hypothesis is on the seam where psyche and system come together, where I use social defense theory to discuss the impact of organizational arrangements on people’s ability to think and work effectively.

Czander (1993) and Hirschhorn (1988) support this hypothesis with their discourse on social defense theory. Hirschhorn (1988) developed seven criteria by which he proposes the psychodynamics of work may be evaluated. They are:

1. Feelings of anxiety are the fundamental roots of distorted or alienated relationships at work;

2. A work group manages its anxiety by developing and deploying a set of social defenses that effectively depersonalize work relationships thus reducing the group’s ability to accomplish its primary task;
3. The social defenses frequently distort the relationship between the group and its wider environment to relieve part of the group’s anxiety. A group dominated by its own social defenses retreats from its boundary with its environment into its collective fantasies and delusions;

4. Group development takes place when group members cease using each other or outsiders to manage their shared anxieties;

5. A desire will emerge to repair the real or imagined psychological damage the group has done in devaluing others. This limits the level of social irrationality in any group and provides a basis for moments of group development;

6. The need for reparation must be greater than people’s anxiety, otherwise they may create even more pervasive and violent psychological splits; and

7. Economics and culture jointly provide the conditions people need to contain anxieties in the complexity of the modern world.

It is Hirschorn’s contention that people are motivated by their defenses against anxiety and that by preserving their own wellbeing they may distort the work of the group and affect others. However, it is only after the feelings of uncertainty are contained that the psychological and practical work of reparation can begin.

5.7 Reflection

In considering the ramifications of personality profiling, I wondered what would happen if the result of my enquiry suggested that contract management required a particular personality type. Clearly, if that was the case, the entire model of using part-time contract managers who had a different principal role in the university would need to be reconsidered. However, the literature review was introducing me to the concept that group behaviour may well be entirely different to that of individuals. The contract manager was not operating in isolation; they were working in a group environment. Consequently I was attracted to the notion of systems psychodynamics and culture change as being a more suitable approach.

At the completion of the initial skills gap analysis, described earlier in this chapter, my manager and I had decided to create a bespoke training course for university employed part-time contract managers. The next chapter describes that iteration of action research.
Chapter 6 – The Second Iteration
Skills gap analysis and training (part two)

6.1 Knowledge

I had identified that the available training courses would not deliver contract management skills that were required in both a timeframe that was considered reasonable for training in the task of contract management and for an appropriate financial cost. From my literature research I had also identified that there is a significant gap in available training courses with regards to the behaviour of people within groups and how people execute a task that involves interacting with others. I am presently hesitating to use the term “Role” because at this point I hadn’t connected Role and Social Defense Theory with the issues I was endeavouring to address in the contract management environment.

6.2 The plan

Design and execute a training course which will bring prospective contract managers process skills to a required level. For example:

- How to process invoices by reviewing the quality and amount of work that was complete against the contract requirements;
- How to review a contract; and
- How to implement a contract.

As part of the course I also wanted to introduce and explore how prospective contract managers viewed contract management and, particularly importantly, how contract managers perceived that their supervisor viewed contract management.

6.3 The action

Through the People Services department (commonly known in other organizations as the Human Resources Department) the university conducted a professional development programme for all staff that was known as the 'Open Programme'. With the agreement of both the Open Programme coordinator and my supervisor it was agreed that I should design, plan and run a half day course for contract managers. The advantage of this was that whilst known contract managers who I perceived needed skills improvement would attend, the course would also be open to any other of the university’s staff who considered this training would be useful in their work.
6.4 The observations

The course was attended by a total of eight people. Twelve people had registered but just did not turn up and did not make contact to say they would no longer be attending. The people ranged from both those who were currently undertaking contract management tasks to those who simply felt that more knowledge would perhaps be advantageous to them in the work they were doing. Even though presently they did not undertake contract management activities and had no intention in the foreseeable future of managing contracts.

At the completion of the course a written response by the participants to a course evaluation questionnaire was required by the course coordinator. This was confidential and once the results were compiled I was provided with a summary to evaluate how effective the course had been in achieving the intended results. The overall opinion was that the course was useful to the participants and assisted them in their knowledge of contract management.

6.5 The reflection

The course ensured that new contract managers would have an adequate skill level to undertake the process aspect of contract management. It also flagged the importance of interpersonal relationships but did not provide any guidance as to how that aspect could be best achieved. It did not address their psychodynamic/psychological wellbeing. I provided a container for their anxiety with respect to the contractor system but I did not provide a container for their anxiety arising from their core department

It was perhaps an indication of the changes that were occurring at the university that two participants were not contract managers and had no intention of becoming contract managers in the foreseeable future. They advised that they considered it useful to expand their skill and knowledge level into areas that were then unknown to them. From the point of view of considering the anxiety that new learning creates it was clearly less confronting for these participants to embark on new learning in an area in which they had no experience than to be improving the extent of their knowledge in an area where they were required to apply their skills. This aspect was not investigated further.

The last two iterations have reviewed the available training courses for part-time contract managers. It had also provided training so that all part-time contract managers should have a basic skill set of contract management processes. The purpose of this was to eliminate a lack of process skills as a cause of contract management failure later in the research.
The next chapter describes an action research iteration of interviews with a selection of contract managers. The interviewees were people at different levels in the contract management hierarchical structure and responsible for managing different types of contracts.
Chapter 7 – The Third Iteration
Interviews

7.1 Knowledge

Contract management throughout the university is undertaken by a wide range of people coming from different skill levels and types of skills. These skills may be influenced by:

- Age;
- Ethnicity;
- Educational; and
- Vocation type.

Except for a few specialist contract managers, generally in property construction areas, line managers throughout the university can be required to undertake contract management activities. This occurs particularly as increased non-core activities, of a comparatively small scale, are outsourced. The contract management role is a small part of these line managers overall role. As a consequence, contract management may or may not be seen to be important by either the manager or others with whom the contract managers relate. This may also give rise to confusion in fact or perception, certainly in the contract manager’s reality, about the level of authority they may have, together with the source of that authority. The ability of a person to complete their tasks is affected by the authority and power which they are given and take. Obholzer (1994, p. 52) in commenting about the experiences from group relations training says:

Authority without power leads to a weakened, demoralized management. Power without authority leads to an authoritarian regime. It is the judicious mix and balance of the two that makes for effective on-task management in a well run organization.

Hence the following hypothetical possibilities:

Contract managers may also view the university, their own functional units and themselves as fulfilling different needs from those perceived by their supervisors and strategic leaders. If this inconsistency is across hierarchical levels it may affect the outcomes from contract management related activities. For example, autonomous decisions may not be made on a basis that is supportive of the overall organization.

Different cultural environments at a functional and organizational level may also mean the views of contract management by practitioners and supervisors may be disparate. This may arise from or give rise to the extent of support that is available to contract managers and may also affect the processes that contract managers may use.
By including in the current research participants such as contractors, frontline contract managers, supervisors and senior managers who determine the university's strategic direction, a pattern should emerge about the congruency of beliefs and reasons for existence from supplier, individual employee, supervisor and senior manager levels.

7.2 The plan

While it was my present knowledge that there may be different causes for the perceived failure of contract management, I used interviews to obtain factual data about the current state of contract management. This data should then provide input to further action research cycles.

The plan was to interview a total of nineteen people who would come from different organizational levels and whose principal skills would suit them for either technical roles or roles based in human communication and relationship skills. The questions were planned as semi-structured, tape recorded and then transcribed. I did this because I did not have confidence that I could note answers accurately, particularly if I found the need to seek clarification. All the participants were asked the same questions. However where a question was not relevant for a specific role such questions were not asked. Details of the questions are attached in Appendix 2 and the interview schedule in Appendix 3.

For example a board member would not be able to make any comment to the question:

How do you split your work role between:

- The overall organization;
- the functional group to which you belong;
- yourself; and
- the contractor?

7.3 The action

The purpose of the interviews was to explore the similarities and dissimilarities in the work of a part-time contract manager. This was done by categorizing contract managers according to their position in the hierarchical structure. Then to similarly explore the experiences of said hierarchy serving different types of contracts. There are a variety of types of contracts involved in the process from highly technical to those dealing with soft skills such as Human Relations contracts.
The above figure illustrates the overall design of the interviews. In the above figure (7.1) the organizational level indicated by the green arrow was divided into five organizational levels.

They were:
1. The university's "Strategic Direction" (high level for example, Council);
2. The university's "Operational Strategy" (for example, senior executive management);
3. People at the university who were responsible for supervising contract managers;
4. People at the university who executed the contract management role; and
5. People employed by contractors as their contract manager for a university contract.

There were three skill streams indicated by the blue arrow in the chart above. The stream was determined by the nature of the contract. The streams were:
1. Technical services such as contracts to maintain buildings;
2. Semi technical contracts such as procurement, audit and IT contracts; and
3. People related contracts such as recruitment and outplacement contracts.

7.4 The participants
A total of nineteen participants were considered. Fifteen interviews were conducted. Two potential participants were not approached due to insufficient time and two declined. One who declined initially later accepted, then again declined. Some years later he left the university. I then asked him why he had declined to be involved in the research. He advised it
was due to his anxiety about who may see the results of the interview and how it might affect his career. The other potential participant, who I have categorized as declined, continually deferred making a decision. He was a direct report to the previously mentioned person who declined so it is reasonable to expect there were similar anxieties.

7.5 The questions

The interview was a semi-structured interview. The participants initially completed a number of demographic questions, as follows:

Table 7.1  Interviewee questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td><strong>Demographic Questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>For a number of reasons age may be a criteria that affects the way people approach their work. Therefore I would appreciate if you would indicate your age group?</td>
<td>20-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 60+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Because the level of education may affect how people approach their work would you indicate the highest level of education you achieved? If the categories do not adequately describe the level of education you have achieved, please add a category that you feel adequately describes your education?</td>
<td>Primary/Secondary level/Apprenticeship/Diploma/Bachelor degree/Masters degree/Doctorate/Post Doctorate/Other (Specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>In many cases contract management at the University is not a person’s principal role. Your vocational training and experience may affect the way you now consider contract management. Therefore would you indicate if your current role was your first choice of career? For example you may have started your working career as a tradesperson or teacher and you are now an administrative manager?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>If your current role was not your first choice of career then for how many years did you work in your first career?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>If you have had more than one career then for how many years have you been employed in your current career?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Because of the length of your exposure to the cultural environment of your workplace may affect the way you approach your work, would you indicate your years of employment at the University?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.7 If you have been employed at tertiary education facilities in addition to the University, would you indicate the total number of years you have been employed at tertiary education facilities?

1.8 You may have been employed in an industry sector other than ‘education’. If so would you indicate what it is and whether it is part of the private or public business sector?

1.9 Because this research is using a systems psychodynamic approach to the implementation of contract management I would like to consider how people’s cultural values are reflected in their work. For example: other researchers have found that language differences impact on negotiations. Therefore would you please indicate your ethnic origin?

The interview itself consisted of a total of thirty two questions arranged in six categories. The categories were:

1. Questions about the participants work role for the university, how they were introduced to it, their authority and what the demands the contractor, their functional unit and the university place on the participant;
2. Questions about the purpose of the organizations and the participants tasks;
3. Questions about contract management training that the participant has received;
4. Questions about the support that is available to contract managers;
5. Questions about the organizational culture; and
6. Questions about how the participant executes their contract management task and how the University's competency at contract management is perceived.

Not all participants were asked all the questions. For example those responsible for the university's strategic direction were not aware of the training, support and some questions about the detailed process of contract management.

These questions were semi-structured in that each participant was asked each question in the exact same manner, however, there would be some discussion to clarify answers and to a limited extent to expand on the question.

The interviews took place during normal working hours at a variety of locations within the university or in the case of contractors, at their workplaces. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher. Interviewees were invited to review the transcription and none changed what had been said.
7.6 The observations

7.6.1 Demographic trends

The following summary qualitatively discusses the extremes and the general demographic trends in the population of participants.

The ages of participants ranged from 30 to 60+. The people carrying out the strategic function ranged from 50 to 60+. Contract managers and their supervisors were well spread and included all brackets from 30 to 60. There was no clear correlation of age with function with the exception of the strategic function who were all in the older brackets. This is likely to be explained by the need for extensive experience to be expected at the strategic level. The result was the same whether the participants were university or contractors employees.

There were eleven males, nine of whom were over the age of 45 and four females, one of who was over the age of 45.

The respondents had all undertaken tertiary university training or post-secondary vocational training.

Only one of the respondents was still working in the career they initially chose.

All of the respondents who had changed career direction had worked almost the same amount of time in their present career as they had in the initial career.

Most of the respondents who were working for the university had been employed by the university for their entire current career.

Two respondents had been employed by another tertiary education institution.

Eleven of the respondents had previously worked in other industries to the education industry.

One participant advised they were Anglo Germanic, four advised they were Australian and the remainder Anglo Saxon.
7.7 Interview data

7.7.1 Participants contract management work role
Participant’s contract management work role for the university is one that generally looks to achieve what is specified in the contract documents. This was alternatively expressed as ‘to achieve what is expected’. All the participants except two advised they had multiple roles within the university ranging from ‘two’ to ‘every role in the university’. One of the two who did not have multiple roles avoided answering the question and the other found the concept of role too hard to define. Where the contract manager role was part-time the role took around 15 to 20% of the person’s time, where it was a full-time role the participant was handling two contracts and ascribed 60% of their time to one contract and 40% to the other. In the case of contract manager’s supervisors the estimated time for a contract management role was less than 5 to 10%. This was approximately half of the time the contract managers reported.
When questioned about their introduction to the role, new employees were far more confident they had been formally introduced to the role than longer term employees.

When questioned about training for the role all participants advised that more training was required with approximately 25% indicating specifically that people skills were required.

The questions around boundary setting elicited a wide range of responses from ‘seems by chance’ through ‘delegated authority’ to ‘contractors set the boundaries’. One supervisor advised ‘boundaries are just known around the university. I only get involved if there are problems’.

The responses to questions about where authority comes from ranged from ‘don’t really know’ to fifty percent advising ‘largely personal authority’ with approximately 30% of the respondents advising their authority came from their supervisor or another higher organizational level. With regards the extent of authority required to adequately discharge the role all respondents advised that the current level is sufficient to properly take up the role.

With regard to the questions around the importance of the role to the organization, the functional group, the contractors and the contract manager all participants saw it as being very important. This was generally phrased across all participants as being important to the overall organization.

7.7.2 The purpose of the organizational and participant tasks
The university’s purpose was referred to differently by long term employees and newer employees. Longer term employees considered the purpose to be teaching and learning whereas the newer employees considered the purpose to be education.
The descriptions of the contract manager’s purpose differed between the groups of strategic managers, supervisors and contract managers. It is likely that these differences arise from considering the contract management task from a different perspective. If this is the case then the context of a role is maybe a key to the way a role is taken up.

Strategic managers expected the contract manager to understand the purpose for the contract and to engage the right contractor. This is likely to come from the strategic context of the managers role; whereas supervisors expected the contract to be managed so that they would get what is needed ‘at the best quality for the money we pay’. In the supervisors role the context is more fiscal or budgetary than the strategic managers context. Therefore the supervisor takes up their role within a different context; whereas the opinions of the contract managers generally aimed to be consistent with the contract requirements. This reflects the more immediate context in which the contract manager takes up their role.

The three groups were of the opinion that the contractor’s purpose was to ‘make money’ and that this idea emerged as the principal purpose according to the groups.

7.7.3 Contract management training
All the contractors and contract managers were aware of internal university training courses but they were not aware of any courses provided by outside organizations or any other form of training.

All except one supervisor considered that more training is required. There was no clear opinion as to whether it should be delivered as an internal or external programme, but if it was delivered internally there should be input via speakers from outside the organization.

7.7.4 Support that is available to contract managers.
Most support came from peer groups. Contract managers relied extensively on external peer networks and supervisors believed support was provided by the functional group.

7.7.5 Organizational culture
The organizational culture was seen as complex with contract managers and their supervisors generally describing it as changing from one state to another. However views were not consistent.

At a strategic level the organization was seen as ‘demoralized, demotivated and confused’; whereas at a supervisor and contract manager level it was seen as a fractured tribe that is changing into something else. However, there was no consistency as to what it was
changing into. Comments ranged from ‘quiet animal that might explode’ through ‘Teflon coated in that change initiatives rub off’ to ‘emerging from the dark ages’.

7.7.6 How the participant executes their contract management role
Generally both contract managers and their supervisors were aligned in the criteria they used for selecting contractors. They considered price/value and level of service to be most important and approximately half of the respondents considered the contractors working style important. They considered it important for the contractors working style to be aligned with the university’s style.

All but one of the respondents advised there was a specific process for the task of contract management and were able to clearly articulate the method. The method revolved around using the contract management plan. This was a document that I had produced and outlined the purpose of the contract, a précis of the terms and conditions and the outcomes the contract was expected to deliver. The reason for its production was to provide new contract managers with a clear reference in managing the contract. The respondent who did not have a clear process was a relatively new employee and was engaged full time in contract management. He relied on outcomes from the contract document and his experience to guide his management of the contract.

The full-time contract managers, whether university or contractors, appeared more self-confident in their ability to satisfactorily execute the role.

7.7.7 The University’s contract management competency
Strategic level managers considered that suppliers are managed well, supervisors considered that the execution of process is well done, contract managers considered a range of activities are effective with no single activity predominating. Contractors did not identify any single item that is done particularly well.

Contract managers, whose principal role was that of contract management, appeared to generally consider they were more adept at their practice. This view was further supported by interviews with contractor’s contract managers (the other side of the fence). Contractors who experienced management by the university’s part-time contract managers viewed the relationship as a difficult one to work with although without exception the relationships were cordial. Contractors who experienced contract managers that were regarded as full-time found the relationship to be both cordial and effective. Contractors in this case did not consider the relationship difficult.
The reasons for failures in the process of contract management were seen differently between strategic level managers, supervisors and contract managers. At a strategic level it was considered that contract managers are not strong enough and the university did not know what it wanted. At a supervisor level the reasons were workload related or a lack of resources. At a contract manager level it was that contract management had not been previously carried out so there was little imperative at the functional group level. Contractors did not consider themselves able to comment on the reasons for contract management failures within the university.

7.8 Major themes across the interviews

The major themes which arose from this data follow.

1. All groups saw the role as being very important to the organization.

2. Different organizational levels at the university have different expectations from the contract management role. This theme of ‘differences of opinion between organizational levels’ extended across the various groups. The groups differed in their reasons for failures in the contract management process. Similarly they differed in their understandings of the organization, support, and the time commitment to satisfactorily take up the role and the authority to take up the role.

3. Contract managers who do not perform contract management as their major role, but as an adjunct role, had the most difficulty in maintaining the role.

4. The organization was perceived as complex because it consists of many isolated organizational units which have unrelated management philosophies.

7.9 Analysis and reflection

In this section I will consider each of the four major themes by stating the theme, giving some analysis and reflecting on the implications for the action research.

7.9.1 Theme One

Statement of theme
The role of contract manager is very important to the organization.

Analysis of theme
All the participants considered the contract management role to be very important to the university’s operation. It is notable that the participants did not consider contract management was necessary for the success of their functional unit. This indicates that the participants do not include contract management in the ‘system’ that has given them a
contract management role. That is, they are not taking on the contract management role as part of their principal role in their functional unit.

**Reflection**

If the contract manager’s organization-in-the-mind does not include contract management as part of the role they take up it may be that this aspect of their role will be split-off if there are greater demands from the functional unit. This then is more a symptom than a cause of the issue arising around part-time contract managers at times failing in their contract management role.

**7.9.2 Theme Two**

**Statement of theme**

Contract management as a role and a process is perceived quite differently by role holders at different hierarchical levels in the organization. For example: senior managers see the contract management role as containing an understanding of the contracts purpose within the context of the total organization while some contract managers consider the role more narrowly as only pertaining to the their specific contract.

**Analysis of theme**

This theme suggests that contract managers, their supervisors and the senior strategic managers view contract management differently according to their roles and the contexts of these roles. For example different roles could reasonably have different perspectives on:

- Contract management;
- Organizational culture;
- Support for the role;
- Time required to discharge the role; and
- The source of the necessary authority to take up the role.

An analysis of this theme is helped by considering role theory. Role theory is a concept that was strongly promoted by Bruce Reed (2000). Bruce Reed was a founding member of the Grubb Institute who used learning by experience methodologies to research the transformation of organizations. In the 1970's Reed helped develop a theory to assist in explaining the dynamic interaction of people with a system through the roles that are given and taken up. He considered there are three interlinked processes involved in a role:

- **Role needs to be searched for and found** by understanding the systems boundaries and its aims.
• **Role needs to be made** by understanding how the system functions and interacts with its environment.

• **Role needs to be taken** for the systems benefit along with all those who are operating within the system. It is a dynamic and holistic process.

Reed (2000, p. 2) suggests:

Role is an idea in the mind. We cannot see a role but we all behave as persons – all the time. By observing someone we can deduce from how they behave what their role is, we as observers form an idea in our mind … What is going on is that mentally the person is ‘constructing’ a set of behavioural patterns so that they can act in the situation to achieve the desired goal. Which is defined in terms of the purpose of this human system of activities. Role is the patterning of ideas by which a person organizes their behavior in relation to a specific situation, seen as a system.

The way role provides an interface between the system and the person is demonstrated in the following diagram:

![Person – Role – System](image)

**Figure 7.2** Person role system interface (Newton, Long & Sievers 2006, p. 128)

More recent formulations by the Grubb Institute (www.grubb.org) include the context for the role and the ‘source’ of the role – in the sense that source provides the purpose and energy for the role.

Throughout life people take up many roles to interact with many systems. For example a mother will take up a particular role within her family, she will take up a different role as a member of a netball team and yet another role to own and operate a business. Each of these roles will be different and dynamic. These roles may be viewed diagrammatically as an
orderly arrangement of systems surrounding a person and interacting through different roles with each system. I have called this a role daisy.

Figure 7.3  Role Daisy

In accordance with role theory, role is a mental construct. This would explain why some contract managers who take up the role have a different idea as to what constitutes the role when compared to others, their supervisors, senior managers or contractors. It also would account for why a supervisor who gives a role could have an expectation that the contract manager will take up the role in a certain manner but when the contract manager takes up their interpretation of the role it is different and delivers different results to those the supervisor expects. It would also account for the difference in the ways the contract manager for a small company contractor might take up their role in comparison to the contract manager in a large educational institution.
Reflection
At this stage in my research I was beginning to hypothesize that these differences in people’s mental construct of role may be important in my research. For example a senior strategic manager may think that the contract manager, in taking up their role, considers how a contract for building maintenance affects the short-term financial result of the university. However, the contract manager, in actually taking up their role, focuses on achieving the lowest possible life cycle cost for the building. Then there is a potential for conflict between the way the senior manager and the contract manager consider the achievement of the contract manager. A typical situation may be that the contract manager has made a decision to spend many hundreds of thousands of dollars to replace some air-conditioning equipment rather than to affect a temporary repair. For the contract manager this is a correct decision as it reduces the life cycle cost. But the senior manager may be faced with a loss of income in the forthcoming six months for some reason totally unrelated to building maintenance. To delay the equipment replacement for six months by effecting a temporary repair costing a few thousand dollars would be more desirable for cash flow than minimizing the twenty year lifecycle cost. From the senior managers perspective the contract manager would not have made the correct decision. However, both decisions in their insular contexts are correct.

Thus it was my hypothesis that:

There is a need to ensure that everyone in a system has a similar mental construct of the contract manager’s role and the authority related to it. Authority may be considered to be a part of the overall context in which the role is taken up. For example if a contract manager assumes a level of authority that is not supported by their supervisor, the role is likely to fail because the contract manager will not communicate sufficiently with their supervisor to assuage the supervisor’s anxiety. Similarly the increased focus on the contract manager by the supervisor is likely to be interpreted by the contract manager as an undermining of the contract managers authority.

7.9.3 Theme Three

Statement of theme
Contract managers who do not perform contract management as their major role, but as an adjunct role, had the most difficulty in maintaining the role.

Analysis of theme
By ‘maintaining the role’ I refer to the capacity to keep the role fully in mind. It appears that when contract management is undertaken on a full-time basis the role is generally held
successfully. That is, in the main the contract manager discharges the requirements of the role successfully and is both effective and considered by others to be effective. However, when the contract manager only holds the contract management role as a comparatively small part of their overall organizational role the role is frequently neglected after a period of time. At this point the role holder is seen to be ineffective, even though they may have been perceived initially to be effective. The question arises as to why might the part-time contract management role is less effective? There are several possibilities:

1. **There may be a lack of training**
   This was a minor theme across the interviews. It may be that on the part of contract manager it is a projection of their anxiety that arises from their perception that others in their principal group (system) consider them to be ineffective. The contract managers had all been given the opportunity to attend a variety of training activities - some did and some did not. The ones that usually attended were comparatively new to the organization. The ones who did not had been with the organization a longer period of time. I construed this to be an effect of acculturation because participation was not mandated as a requirement of skills required for the role. Rather it was usually dependant on the contract manager expressing a personal need for training, occasionally but rarely with training availability being brought to their attention by a supervisor. This apparent underlying culture appears to influence people such that the closer contract managers are associated with senior strategic management in the organization the less inclined they are to take up training opportunities, even though they may initially register an interest. (This aspect will be discussed in greater detail in the consideration of ORA where a strategic level manager was reluctant to participate because it inferred he needed further training.) ‘Training’ provides a suitable container for projection because a lack of training is perceived as a ‘no fault’ failure and capable of being rectified. It is non-confrontational and capable of being rectified without the supervisors or managers needing to experience or undertake any change in the way they take up their role. But for a senior manager, ‘training’ may be construed as indicating they lack adequate knowledge and this may be seen as demeaning.

2. **Contract managers experience the demands of many other roles**
   This is true but most people satisfactorily take up many roles during their life. Some are completely separate; for example a work role and a role as a weekend sportsperson. Some are concurrent but almost simultaneously separate. For example we have all seen mothers taking a buyer role at a supermarket checkout, talking to the register operator in a stable, sensible and logical adult voice then simultaneously taking the role of mother managing children who want to impulse buy, turning to the children and talking in a somewhat frustrated, perhaps almost angry manner urging
them to ‘toe her line’, that is in the context of role theory to take up a role as she is giving it! Thus it can be seen that some roles are long term and some only brief. Therefore the reality of there being many roles that a person takes up in their life does not indicate this is necessarily a cause of the contract management failure.

3. **Contract managers may experience intolerable anxiety from the role**

This is possible. Any work causes anxiety but where the anxiety is not able to be adequately managed then it interferes with the person taking up a role. Krantz (1998, p. 77) suggests:

> No matter how far along the path to the New Order they are, organizations everywhere, buffeted by these turbulent forces, are under immense pressure to alter or dismantle deeply held patterns and cherished cultural arrangements. For many the losses of familiarity and safety are profoundly disorienting (Shapiro & Carr, 1991).

Krantz (1998) further explains that social defense theory is more applicable than before because people can only operate in today’s world when they are in the depressive position. He advises that the depressive position is one of two modes of psychological functioning that Klein (1940, 1946) first described and provides a useful framework for considering the impact of anxiety.

Klein described two states of mind…that form the basis of how we experience the world throughout life. In one mode….paranoid schizoid, people cope with intense anxieties….by employing (primitive defences such as ) splitting, projective identification and idealization. This leads to patterns of thought and experience characterized by blame, scapegoating, idealization, persecution and other distorted perceptions. … (Thus) the ability to engage in interpersonal relations is seriously compromised… At the other end of the spectrum is what she called the depressive position….This mode of experience leaves people with an increased ability to integrate experiences, to think, and to collaborate meaningfully out of concerns that extend beyond survival and self protection.

… when people are operating in the paranoid-schizoid mode the organization is at risk since the capacity for problem solving and genuine thought are possible only when depressive anxieties and modes of managing them dominate’ (Krantz 1998, p. 85).

In conclusion it is apparent that there are many different ways the contract management system and its associated roles are understood by those who interact with the contract
management system. This may give rise to intolerable anxiety which pushes contract managers to react primitively through social defenses. For example, it is not uncommon for the intervals between contractor review or coordination meetings to increase, generally the reason being that other work is more urgent. Then when a few meetings are not held at the predetermined time the contractor is then allowed to ‘use their initiative’ and decisions are made which generally suit the contractor’s interpretation of the university’s requirements and also ensures that the contractors time and financial requirements are met. This behaviour allows the contract manager to neglect the role they find anxiety provoking in favour of an area which may even reduce their anxiety as they can gain kudos for ‘solving a problem’ or doing work they find less confrontational ‘just in time’.

Reflection
To be effective the contract manager must take up their role in the depressive position. This will enable the contract manager to integrate their experiences, think and collaborate from concerns that extend beyond their primitive defenses. From what has been presented in the interviews to date, given that full-time contract managers appear to be able to operate successfully, a relatively easy solution would be to engage full-time specialist contract managers. However, with formal organizational structures being less hierarchical than ever before and their being a constant striving to reduce the labour content of work, this is an unlikely event for most complex organizations. This ‘easy solution’ would maintain the role/system/person model as a ‘simple’ arrangement which allows clarity of boundaries, roles, systems and authority. In this context clarity may be that the boundaries of role, system and authority are understood by everyone within the system. This does not mean these boundaries are inflexible, rather that the people within the system are acting as a team. In the case of a role boundary, if one member is struggling with the work another will temporarily extend their boundary to cover that aspect of the work. Concomitantly the person who is struggling will temporarily shrink their boundary away from this work. This behaviour does not have to be formalized as a managerial instruction rather it is an agreement between the two team members that can even be unspoken, an ‘understanding’ or role negotiation. The key aspect is that it is not an overlapping of boundaries from two independent systems or roles as taken.

I was also considering the frequency that differences of opinion were being experienced between the hierarchical levels of management. From my understanding of Organizational Role Analysis (ORA) I then developed a working hypothesis:

By bringing the hierarchical levels of contract management together in an ORA environment the differences of opinion may be resolved. ORA provides an environment which reflects
Klein's depressive state thus limits the propensity for primitive defenses. Role givers may also gain a better understand about how the roles are being taken up and vice versa. Similarly issues of authority and boundary management may also be clarified to the extent that those involved in the contract management system require clarification for the system to operate effectively.

Therefore as I was undertaking the fourth action research cycle, a review of the experience in wider industry, I also prepared for the fifth action research cycle – Role Analysis.

7.9.4 Theme Four

Statement of theme
The organization was perceived as complex because it consists of many isolated organizational units which have unrelated management philosophies.

Analysis of theme
One of the respondents used the metaphor of ‘A day at the beach’ to describe the organizational culture. They said:

You can go down the beach and you can sit on the shore and you can dabble your toes in occasionally and not get involved! You can also put on your wetsuit, paddle your board out to the big waves and have a crack at it and I’ve seen both at the University. A lot of people get in the swim and go with it and, yeah, come a cropper but they’ve had a go at it. I’ve also seen a lot of people go and sit on the shore and pick shit out of the people out there having a go and you can look at it in all different ways and shapes, there will be a bunch of kids looking in rock pools, down the beach, we’ve got a whole lot of those people in rock pools, there will be someone picking up the blue ring octopus! Yeah, ‘Sorry it’s been nice knowing you!’ There’ll be people that jump in the water but they won’t go out into the surf because they don’t know they might get hurt. I guess you get out of this organization what you are prepared to put in and I probably developed that a long time ago and just, and maybe it’s just, how people look at life. But you can come here and you can look at that cross section of what is going on. I mean you can certainly see it in the academic staff there’s, maybe through my educational experience here, there’s some just going through the motions and I’m sure they’ve been teaching the same thing for the last 30 years, who felt like it. There’s others that come in and, you know, evening sessional staff are always the best examples, they’ve just had a day of hard knocks and they come in and, you know, present those and give you first-hand experience and you say ‘ah
jeez now listen this person has been on that board. Shit! They hit the rocks! Made a bit of a blunder!’ and they’re out there the next day (having another shot).

Another respondent advised that the culture used to be ‘a fractured tribal culture that is now teflon coated in that change initiatives rub off’.

This suggests there is a potential for quite different opinions. Because there are different sub-cultures there are different expected behaviours in a given situation between different contract managers and more importantly between contract managers, their supervisors and strategic level managers.

The potential for difference was further supported by about only half of the contract manager supervisors and the strategic level managers considering that contract managers needed good interpersonal skills. The view that good interpersonal skills are needed was supported by contract managers, yet some supervisors considered that contract managers just needed to be told to ‘do contract management’. Contract managers are responsible to the organization for the contracts financial result and the quality of the product but the method of achieving it is not mandated by any higher management level. However, Obholzer (1994) suggests that contract managers are likely to be operating in a paranoid-schizoid mode if their supervisor or strategic manager adopts the approach that a contract manager should just be told to ‘do contract management’.

Authoritarian, by contrast, refers to a paranoid-schizoid state of mind, manifested by being cut off from roots of authority and processes of sanction, the whole being fuelled by an omnipotent inner world process. The difference is between being in touch with oneself and one’s surroundings and being out of touch with both, attempting to deal with the unrecognized shortcomings by increased use of power to achieve one’s ends. (Obholzer 1994 p. 41)

This difference between levels within the university again attracted me to Reed’s (2000) role model where role is the interaction of person and system and the need for congruency of the organization-in-the-mind and thus congruency in the role as given and taken up is essential to an effective and efficient organization. Krantz and Maltz (1997) describe a framework for understanding the complexity of role and suggest that the ‘role as given’ and the ‘role as taken’ give rise to the authorization of the role. The role as given is defined by those who the role holder is working for or with. It is their expectation of what the role will deliver. The role as taken comprises the role holders internalized construction and interpretation as to what is expected.
Reflection
In thinking about Reed’s model of person and organization as a conglomerate of simple systems that locate a person within society I then considered the complexity that might occur if two systems overlap.

To differentiate between simple systems arranged as a role daisy and this further development I have termed the overlapping systems and roles ‘complex’.

![Complex system and role](image)

What was concerning me was that the simple roles associated with each of the independent systems are manageable at an interpersonal level. But in terms of the combined System 1 and System 2 they are ineffective. It is likely that this is because the boundaries of the combined system contain elements that are beyond the boundaries of the interpersonal relationship or the area of the complex system contains contradictory elements. For example one system's absolute requirement to deliver a certain result for a fixed price and the other system's requirements to be paid for providing advice that is not within the contracts scope but is required to achieve the university's expected result. Contractors reported that whilst interpersonal relations are cordial the execution of the role by the university's contract managers is usually quite poor.

The significance of these complex systems and the associated complex role was not apparent to me until I experienced a worker with role boundary conflict (reported later in this...
thesis) and then reflected on the ORA and the interviews which had previously been carried out.

### 7.10 Final reflection from the interview Action Research iteration

The interviews indicate that there are many instances of inconsistency between the organization-in-the-mind of contract managers, supervisors of contract managers and strategic managers. These could result in inappropriate authority, power or the manner in which roles are given and taken. In the next action research cycle I shall present, to a national audience of practicing contract managers and other stakeholders, the idea that there may be a need to use different methodology than that which is presently used to implement contract management. Currently the methodology is to provide proforma contracts and processes to be followed, there is little or no consideration that contract management also has a human interaction component that is possibly more influential than simply following a process. These presentations will also provide an opportunity for wider industry participants to either agree or suggest how this issue is already being addressed.
Chapter 8 – The Fourth Iteration
Wider industry skills gap analysis and training knowledge

While I was establishing the status of contract management at the university, I needed to move further and see if the experience is similar in wider industry and if there is an understanding that there could be a different approach to contract management.

8.1 The plan

Present at specialist procurement conferences in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth as part of a two-day professional development conference for contract managers.

8.2 The action

At the first two conferences in Sydney and Melbourne I was required to address a title that was provided to me. The title was ‘The Rising Importance of Contract Governance – the buck stops here’. My paper discussed the issues with modern contract management using case studies from my own experience to consider what failed in the management of contracts. I was stressing the human element of contract management. When the conference schedule moved to Perth I had progressed with my literature research and was better understanding Systems Psychodynamics. The title of this paper was amended to ‘The Stakeholders are Human – Considering a New Approach to Contract Management’. The paper looked more closely at the human aspects to contract management. It briefly introduced the idea that human anxieties and the cultural distance between vendor and customer company may be as important as the processes and resources that have been relied upon in the past. I also introduced Krantz’s theory that ‘people create strategic advantage by how they contain anxiety’ (Krantz 1998) and Schein’s (1996) cultural model which proposed three attributes – the artefacts or symptoms of the culture, the espoused values and the underlying assumptions that are often in the unconscious mind. I also drew an analogy between migrant cultures and organizational culture. My concluding comment was:

A possible solution to better contract management is to focus on the systems psychodynamics interactions. Perhaps by providing psychological boundaries to contain anxiety through a clear definition of role and closing the gap between cultures. This is quite a different approach to just telling them to manage the contract!’ (Strachan 2006b).

8.3 The observations

Because the question time at the end of the presentation was focused on clarification I did not expect to obtain any significant data at that time. However, the conference organizers
requested participants to provide confidential feedback on each presentation and I was able to obtain information from these responses. A summary of the comments by participants are:

1. A really interesting approach particularly with the emphasis on understanding the human element;
2. Relevant;
3. Interesting well structured explanation and presentation;
4. Thought provoking; and
5. Provided a view on Governance that was more compelling than just a legislative requirement.

8.4 Reflection
This interaction was quite informative as it indicated that wider industry has not yet considered that a systems psychodynamic approach to contract management is important. However, participants in the conference who were close to the contract management system in their own organizations considered that it is potentially an important aspect that has not been previously addressed.
Chapter 9 – The Fifth Iteration
Organizational role analysis

9.1 Knowledge

Contract management training in both the university and wider industry mainly consists of introducing systems to manage contracts and the legal content of contracts. It also focuses mainly on people whose principal role is that of contract management. People in a complex organization, whose core role is not contract management, are neither trained nor have access to any formal training programme that will assist them in understanding the complexities they will face in managing two or more roles simultaneously. Particularly there is no mention of role boundaries and their importance to containing the anxieties they will experience in managing their roles. In fact it appears from the national conferences at which I presented that even people whose principal role is that of a contract manager consider this an aspect that it not normally covered by contract management professional conferences/seminars/training.

My literature research into the systems psychodynamics of organizations indicates that it is impractical and perhaps even morally wrong, to consider changing a person. One should never attempt to change the person. Personality, Character, i.e. the person is not something that can be changed easily; more to the point, no organization has the right to attempt to change a person. From both a pragmatic point of view (you will fail 90% of time trying to change people) and from a Moral point of view (human beings have a right not to be subjected to forced change) the current strategies for organizational change are mistaken in their approach. (Borwick 2007, p. 2)

This makes logical sense to me and further confirmed to me that one of my original considerations – personality profiling – was unlikely to have achieved the long-lasting change that I sought. It may assist in putting like-minded people together, or otherwise. However, it would not address the complexities of modern large organizations that were flattening their organizational structures and expecting people to take on different roles to discharge a wider variety of work tasks. These additional tasks would not take a significant portion of their time but could expose them to environments in which they were neither familiar nor proficient. For example a forty year-old person who is professionally quite skilled may need to take on a task of contract management that makes them responsible for many hundreds of thousands of dollars on behalf of the organization.
At this point the notion of role analysis resonated strongly with my managerial experience. People do have many roles throughout their lives and many manage disparate roles by placing very strong and rigid boundaries around them. Alternatively they may manage multiple roles through clear but flexible and permeable boundaries.

Borwick (2007, p. 3) recounts the story of role conflict:

A classic example of role conflict is the Swedish manager who acted formally in the office with all his employees and was demonstrative and loving with his wife and children. One day while at a picnic with his wife and children he spotted two of his female employees approaching from across the field. Which role should he assume? His family role or his managerial role? In a terrible dilemma, he packed up his wife and children and fled the field to avoid the conflict in role behaviour.

This was a powerful example that led me to hypothesize that perhaps the issue with part-time contract managers and their failure to properly manage contracts in the longer term was that they had roles which intersected and/or conflicted. Thus I was led to consider Organizational Role Analysis (ORA) as a means of clarifying roles for contract managers. While I could not yet classify it as knowledge I was beginning to form a further hypothesis that role and system boundaries may be flexible and the moving shape was affected by a person’s anxieties at the time. When the role boundaries did not overlap then I termed the system ‘simple’ and when they did overlap as a continually changing role then I considered that to be a definition of a complex role and perhaps also the system. This is illustrated in the following figure which is a development of a diagram that originated from work on person role and system at the Grubb Institute, London (Newton, Long & Sievers 2006). That representation of person-role-system consisted of two overlapping circles showing a single system intersecting with a single person and thus creating a single role. By showing the elements as rigid circles there is an inference that the boundaries of person role and system are inflexible. That representation also does not illustrate the complexity of overlapping systems and roles.
Hence, the issue of part-time contract managers not being able to satisfactorily discharge their contract management duties in the long term may be one of boundary maintenance, overlapping roles creating complex roles and overlapping systems creating complex systems. I thought that where complex roles and systems behaved quite differently to simple roles and systems, then perhaps Organizational Role Analysis (ORA) could assist people to better manage the amoebic boundary of a complex role. I am referring to the system boundaries as amoebic because I am starting to develop a hypothesis that system boundaries are continually reshaping and permeable. An amoeba is a shapeless microscopic single cell organism which absorbs food or environmental debris by changing its perimeter boundary shape to engulf the material. It then absorbs the material through the boundary and subsequently discharges waste through this boundary. (See Chapter 5 for a description of role theory)

9.2 The plan

I was not skilled or experienced in ORA. Additionally I did not consider that I was particularly good at both evaluating people’s behaviour and making notes ‘on the run’. I generally prefer to reflect and then decide what my impression may have been. Hence my plan was to engage a consultant to conduct an organizational role analysis whilst I was present as an observer. This, I thought, would assist me to understand how a role analysis was conducted as well as being able to observe and note reactions and behaviours from the entire group without having to fill my mind with the process that was being followed. This way I expected that I would get a good result for what I was looking to achieve. There was a risk that a
different dynamic could enter the research by the consultant taking on a ‘consultancy’ role rather than a data gathering role. This potential was limited by the researcher and the consultant discussing the proposed action both before and then after the action. Any further issues that arose were then considered and are reported in the Reflection part of this action research iteration.

A significant difference with this part of the research as compared with the previous parts is that I left the organization at the completion of the ORA sessions with contract manager and contract manager supervisors. My contract had come to an end. I was no longer an insider researcher. I had joined the university about six years earlier and my research had commenced about three years after this thus I was clearly an integral part of the university during that time. However, I now worked for a different organization and even though much of the ‘insider knowledge’ was current, I was an outsider. Even relatively simple tasks such as arranging times for the ORA was difficult. In that case I was fortunate that an employee of the university offered to assist in that task. But while the perils of insider research were no longer present they had been replaced with the distance of an outsider researcher. Holian (1999, p. 4) in discussing research from an insider’s perspective recounts:

> We knew that this would involve dealing with conflict and were as prepared as we thought we could be, It was not enough the problems that tumbled out were deeper more shocking and troubling and more full of pain and fear than we had anticipated.

Coghlan (2001, p. 52) further highlights the issues of organizational politics in the case of insider research:

> Undertaking an action research project in one’s own organization is political and might even be considered subversive. Weinstein (1999) lays out the subversive characteristics of action research. It examines everything. It stresses listening. It emphasizes questioning. It fosters courage. It incites action. It abets reflection and it endorses democratic participation. Any or all of these characteristics may be threatening to existing organizational norms.

These examples further illustrate that insider research can, and does, present unexpected influences on the research.

### 9.3 The action

I met with the consultant who had agreed to conduct the ORA and provided him with a brief overview of what I thought I needed to achieve. In discussion we arrived at an agreed format for the ORA. A total of eight people were involved in the ORA. They were divided into two groups of four. The first group only consisted of contract managers and the second group,
supervisors of contract managers including a senior university executive who is responsible for contract management. Each group had two sessions, one for three hours and another for two and a half hours. Then both groups came together for two and a half hours.

Each participant was provided with a written explanation of the objectives and process of this ORA as part of their invitation to participate. The paper indicated that the process was designed to capture the creativity and imagination of a cross-section of the contract management organization to collectively explore the contract management role.

This process was facilitated by a consultant and I, as the researcher, played a silent role as an observer. Then the two groups came together to collectively discuss their findings. In this way the work was intended to be collaborative.

Each of the groups explored the concept of role with each participant drawing a picture of themselves in the contract management role and then explaining it to the group. When drawing the picture the participants were asked to turn their minds to the following:

- What does it feel like to occupy this role?
- What expectations are there of the role?
- How do you feel the role gets constructed by others?
- How do others feel about the role?
- What political aspects are there to the role—what do you have to manage?
- What significance does the role have within the university system?
- What are the challenges, struggles, difficulties or other aspects of your role experience it would be useful to represent so that we might explore these in the consultation?

When the drawings were completed the consultant facilitated the participant’s explanation of the drawing and the remainder of the group observed. Then the consultant facilitated a period of reflection by the rest of the group with the participant observing.

Two people from the eight had not participated in the earlier interview process. They replaced others who were no longer employed by the university. The people who were not interviewed were responsible for the contract management and contract management supervision of the same contracts as those of the participants who had previously been interviewed. Therefore the new participants were also provided with a brief overview of the total research.
One of the participants was a member of the university’s senior executive committee and he declined to participate in more than one session, citing pressures of work. This discussion is also referred to specifically in my ‘observations’. The person nearly didn't participate at all because he believed it was expected he might learn something!

Following these individual sessions with a group of contract managers and a group of contract manager supervisors the two groups came together to reflect on the process to date. Immediately prior to the final group session the consultant provided the following working note:

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**Exploration of the role of Contract Manager**

*A working note*

*This working note represents the consultant’s reflections on the data that has emerged thus far in our exploration of the role of contract manager. The purpose of the note is to open up and stimulate thinking and discussion rather than to offer a definitive and conclusive interpretation.*

‘No [organisation] is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality’ - Winnicott 1978 p240

The data suggests that Contract Management as a role, or as a responsibility within a role, involves managing some of the psychological and political work associated with this strain. The role sits at the boundary between the aspirations and needs of the organization, or a part of the organization, and its external environment; specifically those clients and providers with whom it is in partnership.

The work of contract management is located where the differing and sometimes competing needs and interests of a number groups or systems meet. Such groups or systems may include the University’s staff, legal and administrative functions, senior management, students, external clients, government, the community and a range of external or internal providers. More fundamentally, the role is portrayed as sitting ‘in between’ ‘client’ and ‘provider’.

In one picture the in-between role involves a figure performing a balancing act, straddling the middle of a plank being pulled down at each end while juggling several objects before an
audience whose satisfactions are ‘in the balance’. The strain is visible in the facial expression of the figure.

To strain also means to sieve or to filter and the quote above can be reread in this sense. This aspect of the ‘in between’ role is represented most clearly in two drawings. In one, a filter is drawn between client and provider and in another filtration is provided by an insulating and mediating astroid belt surrounding the university system. The astroid/filter regulates inputs and outputs in relation to two tiers of government represented as gods throwing lightning bolts which are potentially destructive but sometimes vitalising.

The ‘in-between’ function appears to involve the political and psychological challenge of both balancing, mediating and filtering diverse interests, needs, demands, desires, expectations and feelings.

In one drawing the contract manager is depicted as mother, or parent, situated in between (and holding hands with) two children who represent the client and the provider. The image suggests that the feelings, beliefs and expectations that sometimes need to be managed may be quite primitive or primal and associated with an earlier (more childish) developmental stage. At one level (perhaps a more unconscious level) client and/or provider may have childlike, narcissistic, fantastical or impractical plans and expectations at odds with an external reality comprising other stakeholders with their own values, expectations and needs.

In the client-provider relationship each is a part of the external world of the other. Parenting involves at times supporting a child’s illusions about external reality, but this may more generally be conceptualised as an aspect of facilitating the child’s gradual disillusionment about, and adaptation to, reality. The parent, and therefore the contract manager, who is facilitating disillusionment (of the client and/or provider) may be subjected to, and have to contain, associated feelings of frustration and anger as expectations have to be modified. Such modifications and feelings may also be a part of the process of discovering improved methods or initiatives.

One contributor suggested that during the contracting and recontracting phases, this space - between client and provider (between internal and external reality) - can be potentially creative. Creativity occurs when new ways of looking at things, new models, and new paradigms emerge through the interaction of client and provider which impacts and impinges upon reality. An aspect of the contract management role may therefore be related to facilitating creative engagement. This may mean providing space in which parties can play with re-imagining and reconceptualising challenges and possibilities. The word play also
alludes to a vital feature of this space: When we speak of there being play in a system we are describing space, or room, for manoeuvring and making adjustments essential to effective functioning.

The researcher, Stuart, has suggested that failure of contracts may be connected to ‘discontinuities in expectations in the system’. What is the role of contract manager in relation to this? In addition to the management of disillusionment, such discontinuities may arise because there is also a certain amount of *illusionment* and enticement involved in getting parties into contractual relationship and in managing, or juggling, the competing and sometimes pressured expectations of multiple systems.

This raises the issue of the potential for the political dimension of the role to become somewhat Machiavellian. The data suggests the potential for an instrumental dynamic to emerge in relations between client and provider carrying both positive and negative connotations. On the positive side this expresses the productive use of the other to progress problems and work challenges. On the negative side instrumental relations suggests the possibility of parties feeling exploited or duped.

Finally, when contracts fail to produce results and relations break down, the role of contract manager may become a ‘container’ for feelings of failure and become the focus of criticism. Ultimately, the role appears to require the management of relationships rather than just the contract which provides only the basic and legal frame of reference. In other words contract management appears to involve far more than simply managing the contract.


### 9.4 The observations

During the planning for ORA I appreciated that I am not expert in conducting role analysis sessions, as such. I say ‘as such’ because I am now aware that in the past much of my managerial practice has used a very primitive method of role analysis to cooperatively investigate the behaviour of organizational systems when there are issues. I also recognized that I am not adept at conducting a meeting or seminar while consciously recording the nuances of behaviour. However, I did understand that I may both consciously and unconsciously use these nuances, such as body language, the way spoken language is used and other unconscious behaviours, such as my own feeling during an interaction, to interpret what a person is really trying to communicate. Therefore I requested a colleague to facilitate
the role analysis process. Not only did this allow me to focus on the behaviour of the direct participants but it enabled additional data to be collected about:

- the interaction I had with my colleague in setting up the sessions;
- my behaviour in interacting with the participants; and
- obtaining the participants authority to participate.

What I didn’t realize at the planning stage was that I was also introducing another variable into the system – my colleague in his role as the consultant and his effect on the inquiry system. Furthermore the initial contracts to participate were made during the time I was an insider researcher and the latter agreements for the ORA were as an outsider researcher. While I was aware that my authority to facilitate change may be different as an outsider researcher, as compared to when I was an insider researcher, I did not know if this would cause different data to emerge. Similarly, I was unclear about how it might manifest itself.

The participants in the role analysis had also participated in the initial interviews so they knew what the project was researching and that it was an action research process. They had not been given an in-depth background to role analysis but had an overview of what was likely and what was a desirable outcome as I saw it. The role analysis consultant also felt a need to contribute a paper which was issued to participants prior to the initial small group sessions and a further paper to the large review group.

Because I was requesting participation from some senior managers within the organization I had always understood that they would introduce some different issues. These included:

- Their availability and the effect they would have on the process. Participation by senior managers may give the project increased authority or power so that some participants might feel compelled to attend. Similarly, if the senior managers did not want to attend they may influence other participants not to attend. This proved to be the case, in particular the representative from the organization’s strategic management would only commit to a single session which was then further shortened due to a meeting request by his manager.

- One proposed participant had experienced some recent health issues. His supervisor approached me and insisted that he take the place of that participant. This did not cause an imbalance in the makeup of the group as the supervisor had experience as a contract managers’ supervisor, had been previously interviewed (in the role of a contract manager) and the contract manager from this part of the organization was still represented, therefore the substitution was agreed. However, it may have resulted in some data not being presented.
- When the consultant issued a briefing note it appeared there was a discontinuity between what the consultant proposed to present and the senior strategic manager’s expectations. Particularly, he was concerned at a suggestion that there was an expectation that he may learn something. As this appeared to be a criticism of his capacity he was not prepared to accept that risk. By circulating this note to all participants he used his power to influence how the research would continue.
- A particular theme which emerged from the session was that the participants were ‘….doing it for Stuart’s PhD!’

9.5 **Contract managers’ sessions**

Themes which emerged from the contract manager’s drawings, explanations and reviews were:

- The role is about managing internal resources rather than external resources;
- The role is about managing relationships, one presenter saw the role as that of a mothering figure to children;
- The role is about creating change to existing situations; and
- Both sessions were prematurely curtailed because at least one of the participants had another meeting to attend. This was despite there being several weeks notice of the programme of sessions. Additionally, one of the proposed participants did not attend as he was on leave but did not advise the group.

9.6 **Supervisors of contract managers sessions**

Themes which emerged from the supervisors of contract managers drawings, explanations and reviews follow. In the analysis section of this chapter, the themes which were consistently reported across all the sessions, are considered in detail.

- The role is a balancing act;
- There is considerable anxiety associated with the role; and
- All drawings were monochromatic, except one which used colour extensively.

To conclude the role analysis session the group reflected on the presentations to date. My observation of this process recorded the following themes:

- Sees the tension in a role as being an even balance and wonders if it is always that way;
- There are the mechanics of role delivery such as systems and processes but there are emotions, happy & sad people and it is those aspects which ultimately determine the success or failure of the task and role;
During longer term contracts there is a need to change the balance during its period because people’s interactions change the outcomes to something which is undesirable;

- Success in the role may depend on the strength of character of the contract manager;
- Individuals ability to manage turmoil (anxiety?) is questionable;
- A contract is intended to create control but control is often eluded;
- The organization just needs the right people;
- Current performance is okay because it is as good as any other very similar organization, but not necessarily the best way in all industry;
- There is a view that the role and contracts themselves need to be boundaryless and change over time but there was no clear hypothesis as to how that may be achieved; and
- The role is one of a balancing act.

One drawing quite succinctly summarizes the conflict within the contract management role.

Figure 9.2 Participant’s ORA drawing

This picture shows the tensions faced by contract managers. The central figure stands on a plank on which they have to balance while considering the merits of issues on one hand or the other. The two sets of arrows indicate that the roller can move right or left and the plank can move up or down depending on what the contract manager does. On the left hand side of the picture are a group of people who are happy with the outcomes and on the right hand...
side a group of people who are sad about the outcomes. The two figures in the bottom right hand corner, in the words of the artist, ‘just haven't got it yet!’ This means that they do not understand the importance of contract management to the university. At the bottom left hand side are a clock and a scoreboard which mean that contract managers are expected to achieve results within a timeframe.

The main themes of the drawing are:

- the large number of tensions that a contract manager has to balance, tensions over which he often has little control;
- the decisions he makes affect groups of people; and
- the decisions will result in people who are happy or disappointed with the decisions.

9.7 Concluding session

The final session was scheduled for approximately two hours and all the previous participants were invited with the exception of the most senior organizational representative who was not invited. He had previously indicated that he was too busy and could not afford the time to participate further. Another participant had advised he would not be present due to a demand by a new superior and a third participant advised they would only be present for part of the session and did, in fact, leave during the discussion.

Prior to the discussion the consultant and the researcher considered the objective of the session in terms of what questions should be asked to gain the most helpful and insightful answers. And a reminder to the participants of what had happened to date with the exploration in the form of a working note the consultant had prepared.

The questions that should be addressed as part of the session were:

- A complex role has been described as a push/pull feeling from the two systems. Is there a dilemma between responsibility to the ‘home’ system and being fair to all parties? If there is, how does it feel?
- The contract management role is seen as being a complex balancing act which provokes anxiety. How is the current environment? Are contract managers supported by their supervisors?
- How, if at all, has the role of contract manager at the university changed over the last two years?
- It has been difficult to arrange times for people to meet for lengthy periods of time. To properly understand the unconscious forces in a system/role/person interaction, what would make it easier to achieve?
The paper entitled ‘Working Note’ was prepared by the Consultant and then issued to the participants prior to the session.

When this working note was issued I immediately received an email from the person representing the most senior management in the university. He not only sent it to me but also to all the prospective participants. It said:

Thanks, Stuart. Now, I am confused! I thought this session was to enable you to complete your thesis and was aimed at more specifically exploring some of your findings to date. What I find in the attached is a proposal for coaching in how to do our jobs better and with greater satisfaction. What is the research aim for tomorrow’s session? What purpose is the session to achieve and what outcome do you expect or propose?

Whilst I would readily agree that I can always do my job better and with greater efficiency and effectiveness, I did not think that was the main thrust of your thesis and not something I would subscribe to as a result of your thesis.

(participant name)

I responded to the participant and copied it to all the other prospective participants as follows:

Good afternoon (participant name)

The sessions are to enable me to continue the research and I am not being so presumptuous as to tell you how to do your job better. The research to date has identified discontinuities in the expectations between various levels in the contract management chain through the University. The purpose of this exercise is to understand if a role analysis technique can be used to improve the congruency of expectations between strategic, supervisory and contract management levels that are involved in either contract management or the outcomes delivered by contract management. I thought my original invitation explained that.

The consultant who will be running the session provided the overview to enable participants to be aware of the theory behind organizational role analysis. Current applications of role analysis are generally in a coaching environment. You are correct.

The overall research seeks to identify a role analysis variant that would be suitable for the implementation of contract management in complex organizations, thereby
bypassing the effects of personality or dysfunctions between personal culture and organizational culture or other issues that cause the delivery of tasks to be at odds to the organizations requirements. What is also becoming apparent is that such a technique would also be very applicable to the introduction of new employees into an organization, but that would be the subject of another thesis or application in a real-time environment.

I hope this answers your uncertainty and I do trust you are still prepared to participate.

Regards
Stuart

The response to this explanation was less aggressive than the first response and is as follows:

Hi Stuart
Thankyou for explaining the purpose of the session, again, and for clarifying the role of the consultant. I trust the session will therefore be of value to your thesis and the generalized conclusions it may reach, rather than a training exercise which was my concern!
See you tomorrow.
(participant)

However, because the population of participants was transient and in the light of the above email exchange, the consultant and the researcher decided a more informal discussion group was more appropriate rather than the more structured analysis of the work to date that had been planned.

The themes that became apparent during the discussion with participants were as follows.

- Contract managers have come from a wide range of experiences and areas within the University. This is likely to continue.
- Contract managers feel they have little authority over the stakeholders.
- Contract managers believe their task is helped when there is a strong culture of compliance. However, the university's culture is not one of compliance and is not corporate.
- Vendors appear to know the business better than the university and the vendor tends to deliver contract requirements better than the university. The university also has a reputation as being difficult to deal with.
At times it is difficult, politically, to take up the role of contract manager and this causes anxieties.

There have been some pockets of change but more generally contract management is the same.

Culturally there is a deferment to hierarchical organization.

These themes generally addressed the questions that it had been intended to explore in detail.

9.8 Analysis and reflection

This analysis only focuses on the role held by part-time contract managers, not full-time contract managers. Full-time contract managers are able to successfully hold their contract management role over a long period of time, often their entire career. However, part-time contract managers are frequently unable to hold their contract management role over even short to medium periods of time, often less than the period of the contract. This is demonstrated by a high turnover of people holding the part-time contract management role and/or their unsatisfactory performance in the role.

There are four aspects to the ORA, as I put it into practice, which may have had a significant effect on the outcome. They are therefore worthy of consideration.

1. Researcher as an observer
   I engaged an independent consultant and whilst I was an insider researcher I took up a role as an observer who was disengaged from the process during ORA sessions.

2. Transient participants
   Because the ORA took place over a period of time there were changes to the participants as some left the organization, transferred out of contract management roles or did not attend all of the sessions for a variety of reasons.

3. Insider to outsider researcher
   My role as a researcher changed from being an insider researcher responsible for outcomes from the contract management system to an outsider researcher undertaking research that was unlikely to effect the organization but from which I may benefit.

4. The effect of the Senior Manager’s email exchange
   Because the Senior Manager’s email was copied to all the participants it is easily construed as a tacit instruction to the participants about how they were to behave.
I shall initially reflect on these issues and then consider the major themes which arose from
the ORA by stating the theme, giving some analysis and reflecting on the implications for the
action research.
9.8.1 Researcher as an observer

One of the key criteria for the complete success of ORA is that all participants co-operatively work towards finding a solution to their issues. Shortly after the conclusion of the initial role analysis sessions my fixed term employment contract with the university was completed and I moved on to work in another organization. My position was replaced by a person with less authority to change processes and little emphasis on contract management training. Therefore as the person in the university organization who was responsible for training people in contract management processes I was no longer a part of the university and thus no longer held an influential and key role in the contract management system. By leaving the university my authority as a part of the contract management system was also removed.

My behaviour as an observer, rather than a collaborator, to the ORA process may also have been symptomatic of a cultural issue for the organization and a hindrance to the ORA process. The section to which I was attached – Strategic Sourcing and Procurement (SS&P) – had no formal (overall organizational) authority to implement any changes. The only way it was permitted to be involved in procurement activities throughout the university was to elicit the support of client departments. Then, only if the client department wished its involvement, was SS&P allowed to provide guidance and support. Thus, when I left the university and no longer participated in the contract management system I lacked the same level of authority to implement changes identified by the ORA. My behaviour as a non-contributing observer perhaps removed a key influential stakeholder from the system. However, by remaining visible to the participants of the ORA, during the sessions as well as being the session organizer, I may have been seen in the eyes of the participants as a forceful but tacit influence. This may have affected the view of contract management system which emerged

The consultant also exerted an additional influence on the system as he added his own views and is also likely to have appeared as an expert to the group rather than simply a facilitator aiding a group of contract managers in collaboratively identifying issues and solutions to problems within the contract management system. This view is supported in a subsequent interview with one of the participants who, at the time of the role analysis, appeared particularly swayed by the consultant's views. During a recent follow-up interview he consistently referred to the consultant as 'doctor' even though the consultant was only considering undertaking a PhD at the time of the ORA and has since discontinued his candidature. During the ORA I felt intimidated by the apparent expertise of the consultant but equally did not feel sufficiently confident to express this and identify why this was occurring.
9.8.2 Transient participants
Several of the participants did not attend all the sessions or curtained their involvement in the sessions. Most cited pressure of work or other meetings. A significant lead was provided by the most senior strategic manager who at the first session said he would need to leave early to attend a meeting with his ‘boss’. In subsequent sessions he did not attend and some others did not remain for the entire time. In reflecting on the sessions where participants left early the reasons for other commitments to take precedence over the ORA was not explored. However, one participant observed that they were engaging with the research as part of ‘Stuart’s PhD’. Perhaps this is an indication that they had not engaged with the ORA as a source of support to their role as a contract manager, preferring to take on a role that provided support to another person’s work that enabled them to avoid the anxiety that would be associated with them taking up a role which would include a responsibility for achieving an outcome from the process. This may be more evidence for a general organizational defence against accountability for contract management by part-time contract managers.

9.8.3 Insider to outsider researcher
As mentioned previously the SS&P section was set up with limited authority. Some of the participants also took up the participant role as one of assisting me in my study rather than assisting them in their work. Thus there was little change in the relationship when I moved from insider to outsider researcher from their point of view. However, what I was then unable to access were the informal ‘cups of coffee’ discussions that provided me with insight to how the contract management system was working. Particularly I was able to fully understand issues that would reflect poorly on the contract manager’s performance and also reflected their management of the political environment.

9.8.4 The effect of the Senior Manager’s email
The email stating what the manager expected was sent to all the prospective participants only the day prior to the final role analysis session. It certainly imposed on the participants an expectation that senior management did not expect to find anything that would help improve how senior management interacted with the contract management function. It was again an example that participants were expecting ‘to help Stuart with his research’ rather than collegially or cooperatively explore why contract management, an organizational system of which they were all a part, frequently fails. To the participants, some of whom reported directly to the senior executive and others who were indirect reports, this email was a very powerful instruction. It also used the manager’s power rather than authority to instruct and was closer to a Taylorist management approach than a systems psychodynamic management approach.
9.9 ORA themes

9.9.1 Theme One

Statement of theme
The performance of the university's contract managers is good for a university and unlikely to change significantly.

Analysis of theme
The participants in the concluding session considered that the delivery performance of contract managers was strongly influenced by the university's hierarchical culture. They also considered that vendors understand the business better and can adapt more readily than the university's contract managers.

Reflection
There is some evidence for this in my research. The email by the senior manager sent to all the ORA participants gave out an informal message that this research could not in itself help them in their roles. The research was purely for Stuart. The hierarchical nature of the management influenced whether or not participants might take up a collaborative learning task around the research.

Additionally, I believe that this theme indicates a defense against anxiety by the group. There are two aspects to this. The first is that the participants placed a boundary around their performance comparison by limiting it to 'universities'. This meant that the wider population of contract managers in both the private and public sector did not need to be considered by contract managers or their supervisors when they were evaluating their performance. This avoided the anxieties that may have been provoked by taking a wider comparative view.

The second aspect is that by claiming that the performance of contract managers is strongly influenced by the university's hierarchical structure supports a possible belief that the university cannot be changed. This then absolves the contract management system from needing to change within the university system.

9.9.2 Theme Two

Statement of theme
The contract manager role is one which causes significant anxiety.
Analysis of theme

The contract management role is one which seeks to control outcomes in a changing environment. However, the contract managers inability to control the outcome causes anxiety as the contract manager is measured on their delivery of outcomes. Some supervisors of contract managers believe that contracts need the ability to be changed during the term and should not have boundaries, but this also causes anxiety for the contract manager. Both supervisors and contract managers saw the role as one which is intended to create changes to the organization. However, a contract manager appears to have little authority over others in the contract management system and this causes anxieties which individual contract managers are then unable to control. This causes the contract manager to engage defenses in a cascading stream. Hirschhorn (1988, p. 42) discusses this as an anxiety chain.

First, anxiety about work can lead people to step out of their work roles. In this way they turn away from work realities and create a surreal world in which challenges can be met with fantasies of omnipotence, dependence or defensive denial.

Second, when people … collaborate, one person’s anxiety may trigger an anxiety chain through which people deploy collective fantasies to deny risks.

Third, these fantasies are filled with violence, as people both punish themselves for their own failings and imagine that others are their persecutors.

Fourth, as people step out of role they also step away from one another. They experience…others as though the others…are either all good and beautiful or all bad and evil.’

Hirschhorn (1988, p. 42) then summarizes:

Thus paradoxically we are not alienated from one another because roles separate us. Rather, we lose touch with one another when we violate the roles that might help us collaborate.

Considering the contract managers dilemma as an initial anxiety triggering a defence which then creates further anxieties with their own defences we see the following:

Primary Conflict – The perception of supervisors is that to execute the contract management role requires a relatively small amount of time. The contract manager’s expectation, reported in the interviews, is that it takes significantly more time. This discrepancy creates an initial anxiety for the contract manager.
First Level Defense – The contract manager reduces the amount of time they devote to the role.

Second Level Conflict – By reducing the amount of time devoted to the role the contract manager believes they will not achieve the required results. This creates further anxiety.

Second Level Defense – The contract manager may seek the authority of their supervisor to spend less time on contract management. The supervisor may consider it preferable for the contract management role to fail rather than have failure in that which the supervisor considers to be the primary role of the department. In the case of Health Services, what was originally a core task has been given to contractors to ostensibly relieve the department of work load, and indirectly the responsibility for enacting better practice. The supervisor then relieves their anxiety by potentially scapegoating the contractor for any failure in the delivery of the services.

Third Level Conflict – By collaborating with the contract manager to corrupt the role the supervisor creates further anxiety in the contract manager. This is because the contract manager is still aware that the contract management role, although part of their principal role, is not valued so much by their supervisor. The principal role is likely to be based on their professional role and their performance only partially evaluated on their performance in the part-time contract management role which they consider likely to fail. They then perceive their professional performance will be compromised by a role which is not supported by their supervisor and will reflect poorly on them in their primary profession. This is despite the contract management role being important to the university and their performance in it also being evaluated.

Third Level Defenses – There is little scope for the part-time contract manager to ameliorate this situation other than:

- to find another area within the department, that does not require any contract management, where they can focus on their key profession;
- to knowingly drop the contract management role and hope that by delivering their prime professional role their supervisor will consider it good management to re-scope their role to drop the contract management role. This also highlights the supervisor’s defense that was reported several times in the interviews that ‘we need the right people’ as well as an expectation that the supervisor will collaborate in corrupting the role; and
to leave the organization because the position description (overall departmental role) was not what they imagined it to be as it is causing irresolvable anxiety and anger. Anxiety and anger will alienate the worker from their colleagues.

Organizationally this scenario is common, in fact to be expected. Czander (1993, p. 114) advises:

social defenses are a way of structuring external reality to avoid the anxiety evoked in work. Menzies and Jaques, who suggest that social defenses have pathological consequences, see the employee in a no-win situation. If employees attempt to escape from the organizations constructed social defenses, and later on if they attempt to confront reality, their anxiety will dramatically increase and psychic decompensation or regression to a primitive mode of functioning may result. It seems that in order for an employee to confront organizational reality, he/she must work through the anxiety without the use of social defenses, To accomplish this successfully would require one to work in an organizational context capable of providing the necessary support, nurturance, and transitional objects.

I then viewed the organizational unit, rather than the contract manager, and was informed by Czander (1993) as to what happens if an organization is influenced by an employees pre-existing ego structure and defense organization to create an environment which is psychically gratifying to the employee. However, if this environment fails Czander (1993, p. 114) continues:

under these circumstances the employee will experience unnecessary anxiety and will be encumbered with unconscious regressive pulls into primitive modes of functioning as a feeble attempt to restore ego balance and reduce anxiety. These regressive pulls may, over time, become part of the organization’s structure and culture. This is why some organizations appear to outside observers as pathological, where behaviors like aggression, schizoid detachment and narcissistic preoccupations prevail. But to the insiders (the employees) the organization is comforting.

In an organization such as this, a new employee engaged to undertake the part-time contract management role and who initially succeeds, is likely to be outcast because they are not seen by other members to be behaving similarly to existing members. Once outcast the new employee will then engage in defenses that result in the failure of the contract management part of their role. Therefore it is worth reflecting on the first theme in this section where participants considered the university’s ‘hierarchical culture’ was unlikely to change. This indicates the university system, given the perceptions of strategic level managers reported in
the interviews, will sustain the conflict by requiring role holders, who were engaged to undertake a primary task within the bounds of their profession or vocation, to take up a part-time contract management role. However, this expectation is made without also providing suitable boundaries to the role.

9.10 Reflection

The purpose of the ORA was to collaboratively inquire into the contract management system. In other applications of ORA such an inquiry appears able to identify issues with a system in a non-threatening manner that allows changes to be made that deliver an improved result to all parties. Because I was no longer a direct participant within the university’s contract management system I was unable to clearly identify if contract managers and their supervisors have changed their practice as a result of this enquiry. This became a practical limitation to the research. Similarly the senior executives email advising that he did not accept that my research could give either he or any of the other participants any advice about ‘how to do our jobs better and with greater satisfaction’ clearly undermined any expectation that the ORA would result in improvements. My response also affected the result because had I failed to secure his participation. At that late stage, then the commitment by other participants would have been limited.

At the conclusion of the session I sent a ‘thank you’ email to all the participants. One person, a direct report to the senior executive, replied with:

I personally found it interesting and rewarding … It actually also allowed me to convey a few things to my boss in the process and that will be beneficial in dealing with some of the situations.

He then continued to indicate that the process has a far wider application than to just the implementation of contract management, with ‘My perspective was much broader than contract management…’.

In retrospect even though there were some areas in which I, as a practitioner, had not undertaken the ORA as well as I should, it was never-the-less quite successful in identifying systems psychodynamic issues and reasons why the part-time contract management role fails. It has also become apparent to me that the application of ORA does, and should, apply to many other organizational situations. However, I had not yet reached a point at which I was confident contract management, or any role, could be implemented successfully every time. Perhaps I was seeking the impossible but I wanted a comparatively simple method by which managers who are relatively unskilled in systems psychodynamic practice can
effectively understand how to expand existing roles to include professionally non-core part-time roles.

I then considered Bain in (Menzies-Lyth 1989, p. 6):

Bain (1982) has given very clear description of the kind of analysis that needs to be carried out by the institutional consultant. It is tripartite, role analysis, structure analysis and work culture analysis. Theoretically separable, they are likely to be worked on together at the same time and with the same people. All can be linked substantially to the work of a psychoanalysis since it explores the conscious, implicit and unconscious elements in commonly held beliefs and attitudes, patterns of relationship, the psychosocial context in which work is done and people collaborate in doing it.

This suggested to me that I should consider some of my past practice that had successfully achieved permanent changes to an organization, and endeavour to understand why they were successful when I did not believe I had undertaken an entire role/structure/work culture analysis. It was then likely this would further inform the research I had undertaken to date and enable me to clarify more of my discoveries.
Chapter 10 – Case Study Review

10.1 Preamble

At this point of the research I had left the organization. Therefore further work described in the next two chapters was not part of an action research iteration. However, it did form an important part of my research because it helped clarify in my mind the conclusions I have reached. For consistency I have used a similar format to the chapters outlining the action research. I continue to outline my knowledge to date, but rather than have a plan and an action step I have called the step ‘The Activity’. This step provides a context and description of the activity before I continue to discuss how this activity informed me in terms of my observations and reflections. The reflection step is again most important as it allows time to consider the context of the activity and where it then leads.

10.2 Knowledge

Having observed and reflected on the results of the Organizational Role Analysis (ORA) it is apparent that a case study of a change activity that I had previously undertaken needs to be considered. I now had two examples that I had been involved with, one which had been quite successful some years earlier and the more recent ORA which had not achieved the success I felt the technique deserved. I needed to understand why. I was still fairly convinced that the issue lay with the management of role boundaries and anxiety. In particular I was concerned about the fluid role boundaries which occurred in a complex system that behaved like an amoeba. I had not yet identified what caused these boundaries to move and thus change the way the role was taken.

10.3 The activity

This activity reviews a case study of work I completed in the late 1990’s. At that time I was not consciously aware of the effect of anxieties, role boundaries and defenses. Therefore it may be helpful to compare this with the role analysis intervention described in the previous chapter.

The case study documents a change management process within a section of a Federal Government Business Enterprise (GBE) that had been losing 10% of revenue for many years. In the private sector this would be an intolerable situation. The GBE provided maintenance services to government facilities, was increasingly targeting private sector businesses and had a turnover of around $350m. The section that is being studied had a
turnover of around $10m and staffing levels of about 120 people. I was the manager of this section and had full authority to take whatever action I required in order for the section to achieve a profitable result that would be sustainable. The workers were generally highly skilled, had been employed in secure government positions for most of their careers and provided on site services. Consequently they were not closely supervised; there was even anecdotal evidence that some were running private businesses during their employer’s time! The business was highly unionized and many employees were heading towards retirement with generous superannuation allowances. Thus there was little incentive for them to leave their employer. For many, they only wished to retain the easygoing working conditions that did not require them to be accountable for their performance.

I had been recruited by the General Manager, to whom my position reported, as a result of me unsuccessfully applying for the position some months previously. Because I did not have a lot of ‘government’ experience an existing employee, who had been in government employ for his entire career, had been selected in preference to me. I was therefore initially recruited into a ‘sales coordination’ role that acted as support to the sales function of the business. This enabled me to be introduced to the employees in a non-threatening role and to learn about the business, its internal politics and why, perhaps, it was unable to operate profitably.

When the current manager went on leave I was asked to review the section and make recommendations as to how it could be made sustainably profitable. Whenever I had previously undertaken business improvement activities I had always worked alongside employees to collaboratively achieve changes that we had collaboratively identified. Consequently when my review identified there were many operational dysfunctions, morale and work-ethnic issues, my recommendation was that I work within the business to achieve change rather than attempt to achieve change simply as an instructing consultant. This would enable me to work collaboratively with the staff to change organizational processes. Effectively this was a structure analysis as discussed by Bain (1982). By doing this I expected that morale and work ethic issues would improve and this would also enable us to identify appropriate staffing levels and a means of achieving them. It was clear from ‘rule of thumb’ measurements that there was insufficient revenue to support the current staffing level. Either revenue had to be raised (this had been the usual approach in the past, although the required increase was never achieved) or staffing levels had to decrease but without sacrificing the skill and knowledge base of the organization. In other words a sustainable reduction of staff, not simply ‘slash and burn’ to achieve profit.

My recommendation was accepted and I commenced to work in the business. One of my earliest actions was to meet with the leadership team. The leadership team consisted of five
trade discipline heads, a finance controller, a receptionist who also controlled the allocation of work orders to trades and was the first contact for all outside work requests, a sales person and myself. My briefing covered the financial performance to date and then looked at the future. I proposed that with all the changes none of us could know what the future would bring as individuals but that it would be highly unlikely that any of us would be unemployed and unable to do anything five years from then. The timeframe of five years was a purely arbitrary period of time. I then continued with a statement that the business would be making a profit because with good management it was a potentially lucrative business and there was no reason that it couldn’t. I then concluded with a statement that we would be working hard, achieving our goals and that we would also be having fun from achieving good results! This last statement, that ‘we would be having fun’ caused some eyebrows to be raised and most of the attendees to show significant interest.

The next step was to have a meeting of the management group and to sketch out a process map for the functions the business undertook that was integrated with the organizational structure. This was different from an extremely complex process map for the entire $350m business that a consultant was developing. We then collaboratively identified the issues with the processes and proposed revised processes. I was fortunate to have a whiteboard that covered the entire wall of my office that included a meeting area at one end. The integrated process map/organizational chart was sketched on the whiteboard. I told the group that they were welcome to change the processes on the board if they wanted to try something else or if something proposed was not working. I reinforced this expected behaviour from time to time by inviting one or more people who were involved in a process that didn’t appear to be working satisfactorily to help me review the process on the whiteboard. Soon people and small groups started to amend parts of the process and organizational chart. They would just come into my office and quietly work on the process map.

The next step was to implement the proposals and then review them after there had been a chance for them to work. Sometimes they didn’t work but more often than not they would have achieved some degree of success. In the case where only part of the change was not working then only that part was changed. It was left to the people affected by the process to make the call as to the improvement’s success.

It only took a few days for people to realize there were no rewards other than the self-satisfaction of doing something well and for implementing a change that improved our work. Importantly, there were no penalties for getting something wrong.
However, some people were clearly uncomfortable with this approach and decided to leave the organization. I was surprised that some who were electing to leave were still quite positive towards the changes that were being effected. Despite stepping to one side to allow their position to be filled by a permanent employee, some even assisted the new employees as well as assisting the implementation of new processes and practices prior to their leaving the organization.

I also identified some cultural dysfunctions. For example some employees were operating their own businesses at the same time they were supposed to be working in this business. It was believed that some were even buying materials for their own business at a cost to the business for which I was now responsible. With the severe lack of accountability processes to monitor production this was almost impossible to confirm to the level that would enable disciplinary action to take place. Part of the reason for the lack of easy monitoring was possibly because much of the work was carried out offsite by service people who travelled from worksite to worksite by motor vehicle and only visited the home base a few times a week. This is common with most service businesses but in this business there was little monitoring of work or evaluation of how long a task should take.

Also many of the contracts, as far as the client was concerned, were for comprehensive maintenance. Comprehensive maintenance is where the service provider carries out maintenance and repairs for a cost that is agreed at the outset of the contract. Thus the client is not concerned if the work takes one hour or ten hours to complete and whether the service person uses any or a lot of materials. The effect of this is that there is no checking by the client on the hours and materials recorded by the service technician for the work undertaken. The service provider then needs either a culture where service technicians pride themselves in undertaking the work efficiently and effectively or a very extensive checking process for evaluating the correct amount of time and materials required for a specific task. The previous incumbent of my position had partially addressed this by recruiting a foreman to one of the sections who was very active in monitoring his reports and who also had a very strong personal work ethic. I extended this by recruiting two more people to positions in the business where they could influence different levels of worker.

One aspect of the culture was that the plumber’s shop would have a few drinks on a Thursday night about half an hour after their ‘knock off’ time. I generally made it a habit to go down about an hour later and also have a drink with whoever remained. The topics of conversation covered both work and non-work, anything was up for discussion. After I had been in the manager role for a couple of months I felt I needed some informal feedback and thought that I was likely to get honest feedback in this forum. So I simply asked ‘How do you
think that I am performing as a manager?’ The comment that came back to me was, to say the least, quite off-putting and I almost wished I had not started the discussion. The reply was, after quite a silent period, ‘Well, you are not really a manager’ My immediate feeling was that I should just say ‘thank you’ and pursue it no further as it appeared I had failed in my role. However, I then asked ‘why?’ and the response was ‘Well, real managers sit over there in the office and we never see them, you come down here and get involved in our problems and work with us. That’s never been done before!’ To say my anxiety was relieved would be a gross understatement!

Over a period of months the financial results of the section improved, albeit slowly. This was a measure that was easily quantified and was obviously a key performance indicator. However, the qualitative measures of customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction were also measured.

At the start of the process, shortly after I assumed responsibility, an independent customer survey was conducted. This was repeated after approximately nine months. The results showed a significant improvement in customer satisfaction.

As part of the process I had also engaged an HR consultant from Head Office to do nothing other than once or twice a week to spend time in the section identifying any employee concerns that were not being addressed. The nature of his role is aptly described in the job description title he informally used to describe what I needed him to do – he was the ‘Chief Head Patter’! From time to time he would identify issues that employees had with some of the changes that were happening. He would then not only reassure them but he would also suggest that they discuss their concerns with someone else who was involved more closely with the process. His reporting then formed the basis of an independent evaluator of employee satisfaction. He facilitated the employees taking authority to resolve their issues and strongly supported the concept that: ‘it is okay to be wrong or not to understand, it is not ok to not bother finding out more or discussing/debating concerns’.

The organization was in a state of considerable turmoil as the federal government was heading to an election and it was likely that the GBE would be privatized. An indication of the anxieties that were present at higher levels of the organization was when my supervisor – the state manager – called on me late one afternoon. He had happened to meet with a union representative in the foyer of the section and was subjected to a very angry union official. We were planning to offer separation packages to induce some workers to leave the organization. After a period of time the state manager came into my office, visibly shaking and asked me to talk to the union official. I did so but rather than talk I spent most of the time
listening, only correcting statements by the official that were clearly wrong. It took about half an hour before the official calmed to the extent that a rational discussion could be had. Following my explanation we seemed to gain an increased level of respect for each other and were able to part on more respectful terms. My supervisor was quite surprised and clearly less anxious when I returned to advise that a less confrontational environment had been restored.

It took us close to twelve months to achieve a profitable operation. Over the next few months we then occasionally slipped back into loss but came back to profit. The change process was clearly successful and I understand the business has continued as a profitable unit since then.

10.4 Observations and comparisons with the Action Research

The following observations were made about the case study. They are also compared with the action research.

- In the case study my introduction to the organization as a non-threatening collaborative associate of the workers enabled me to establish relationships, as well as my professional credibility, in a way which the workforce was familiar. This meant that my introduction did not raise the workers anxiety to a significant degree. In the action research training iterations my introduction was not as a collaborative associate. I was a member of a marginalized group which had little authority.

- By the time I was ready to take the role of manager in the case study I had gained the workers confidence that I was likely to be proficient in the manager role. Thus when taking the role I did not cause any insurmountable anxiety for the workers. At the university I had been working in the contract management area for some time before the ORA iteration. However, because the research was not supported by some senior management as a way to collaboratively learn about the system, the participants in lower hierarchical positions could more easily assuage their anxiety by considering the ORA ‘Stuart’s research’. Thus they did not engage collaboratively with a process that might deliver improvements for the university. It is even likely that they would have seen the section to which I was attached, even myself, as quite irrelevant to the purpose of their own section within the context of the university.

- At the time of the case study I did not realize the impact of my introductory talk to the senior workers. My suggestion that we would ‘have fun’ was a key indication to them that my method of resolving the dire financial predicament would be very different to
previous managers. It was likely to be far less anxiety provoking than methods other managers had adopted.

In the action research the consultant took his role as a facilitator very seriously and was professional in his delivery. He was also presented to the participants as an ‘expert’. His description of the task was similarly serious and intense. In a university environment this was an expected approach. Therefore it is reasonable to anticipate that the participants would expect an expert's participation to increase their anxiety levels. This was their normal expectation of work within a university environment. It could be considered that if the collaboration had been phrased as a ‘fun’ activity of ‘drawing pictures’ the ORA would have been viewed as less anxiety provoking. Rather the suggestion that capturing ‘creativity and imagination’ may have inferred capturing unconscious thoughts. This may have caused more rather than less anxiety.

- The technique of working with people on the ‘shop floor’ during the case study rather than taking an ‘I am mightier than thou’ role allowed me to take away much of the anxiety that the workers were experiencing.

The section to which I was attached at the university had little authority to make changes. In fact the email exchange by the senior manager conveyed the impression that it was not expected that anyone would learn anything useful to their work from the ORA.

- The role of ‘Chief Head Patter’ in the case study was an essential one to relieve worker anxiety.

Throughout the entire period of action research there was some evidence that some supervisors supported the contract management role. However, no one assumed a role which relieved workers anxiety. This may have been due to the general lack of authority afforded the contract management role and my research role was considered irrelevant to the contract management process.

- The technique of collaboratively working on the organizational structure at the same time as influencing a culture which reduced anxiety enabled changes to be readily effected in the case study.
The culture in the university environment was not one which inherently reduced anxiety. The senior manager did not view working collaboratively to improve the university as an expected outcome from the ORA. Therefore, as a result of his email exchange, anxiety amongst participants was likely to increase.

- The lowering of anxiety levels throughout the workforce in the case study was evidently passed on to the clients who experienced greater attentiveness to their needs. It is likely that the workers had a greater capacity to take the clients projections of anxiety and then hold them as their own anxieties. This had been resolved by both my method of management and by their own involvement in the structural analysis and redesign.

During the action research the clear method of reducing anxiety was for participants to consider that the research would not create change for them but would enable them to help someone else (the researcher). Thus they would not be exposed to increased anxiety by adopting any proposed changes and their internal desire to be able to help others would be easily satisfied.

- By taking a leadership role for the case study cost/profit centre I was able to put a clear boundary around the organizational system we were working to improve. I had also been given the requisite authority and power to effect any changes I wished by my immediate superior as well as the workforce. I had also taken up that authority and power and was using it ethically.

Conversely, in the Action Research a boundary was put around the ORA by the senior managers email exchange. Then when I moved from being an insider to an outsider researcher the system boundary no longer included any ability to effect changes to the contract management system. I had little or no authority within the contract management system. The research was viewed by the participants as being purely for my own benefit.

10.5 Reflection and learning

My entry to the system had been progressive. I had started as a ‘helpful consultant’ and once the workforce had confidence in me I had moved to the role of manager when an opportunity was provided. This transition was not clear but it was in context of the organizational culture which expected people to improve their positions from within the organization. I had taken up the role of manager as I saw it in my mind. It was different to the role-in-the-mind of the
workers and perhaps also my superior. However, because of the way I took up the role it relieved the anxiety of the workers but not their accountability for their performance or the delivery of their work tasks. In the past the culture had enabled workers to project their accountability onto the manager. By not accepting this projection, but resolving their anxiety by providing a ‘no blame or fault’ work environment I was able to reject the projection of accountability and the workers then self-monitored their performance. Thus the unit became more efficient and ultimately delivered the requirements of the parent organization – profitable operation and growth. This had not been possible previously when the organization had only addressed structural change or allowed managers to assuage their anxiety by blaming the lack of profitability on a lack of growth, something for which they were not accountable.

The introduction of a new cultural way of operating was not carried out as an imposed culture alone. It was also demonstrated by myself and others I had recruited as ‘just the way we work’. For example my use of the after work drinks, while not necessarily in accordance with appropriate modern occupational health and safety processes, was a method of demonstrating my acceptance of an existing cultural artefact and then using it as a way to communicate in the same cultural language. In another environment – the construction of new housing units – I had initially tried to project manage the building process in a non-confrontational manner. But after a while I felt I was being considered an ineffectual project manager. I was also the financier and therefore exposed to significant financial risk. I then reverted to the more common adversarial approach that occurs on many building sites, swearing, thumping the table and similar aggressive behaviours. This took little time to redress the situation and I then realized it was because I was using a cultural language that both parties understood. Clearly it is not possible for one party to use one cultural language and the other to use another cultural language. In this respect it is no different to everyday language.

While I had not knowingly undertaken a tripartite consultancy of role analysis, structure analysis and work culture analysis as described by Bain (1982). I had started with a collaborative structure analysis, then used leadership ‘role models’ to demonstrate and influence the adoption of a different culture and as a part of the structure analysis collaboratively identified the system boundaries and the required roles to satisfy the needs of the system. I was not employing an educated systems psychodynamic approach because as far as I was concerned that certainly did not exist. But in the context of a collaborative, experiential action research approach, I ‘unknowingly stumbled across’ a successful means to effect change, that did occur. But, it was not until the work that I have undertaken in preparation for this thesis that I have gained understanding of the systems psychodynamics.
My comprehension of how it all fits together in a practical application of organizational change was facilitated by the next chapter where a worker with role boundary confusion acted as a catalyst to my comprehension.
Chapter 11 – Performance interview with worker experiencing role boundary confusion

11.1 Knowledge

At the beginning of this research I considered that the failure of contract management processes, executed by people whose contract management role was a small part of their principal role, may be due to their personality. My literature research discounted this belief as I came to understand more about how roles are given and taken in an organizational context.

I then conducted a range of interviews to gain a better understanding of the part-time contract management activity and process. My reflection at the conclusion of this research iteration was that there is little consideration of the human interaction component in the contract management activity. This view was also supported by a wider industry review that I undertook when I delivered papers to specialist conferences in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

As a result of the research to date I then used an Organizational Role Analysis (ORA) process to collaboratively inquire into the contract management system. I was not satisfied that ORA would always result in a change to the way people give and take a role.

I then used a case study from my past practice to consider a situation where roles were discussed, that appeared to have been successful in achieving change. One might consider this as a primitive form of ORA. This reflection on a comparison between the ORA and the case study identified the imperative of considering:

- anxiety
- authority
- collaborative culture
- boundary management.

All these aspects have their roots in the systems psychodynamics of role.

The following iteration was not initially planned as part of the research but it had profound effect on crystallizing many of the issues which I had been considering. Therefore it would be improper for me to not to report it.

It is also an example of the vagaries of action research as it is applied in practice. Action research may be informed at the most unexpected times. Because it is ‘realtime’ and ‘live’ research the researcher needs to be cognizant of information feeding into the iterative loops
at any time. Information provided in this way may either support or discount the research outcomes that have been obtained thus far along the research path.

11.2 The activity

As part of developing an understanding of a new company I had joined I attended a series of staff performance interviews. The expectation was that I would get a better impression of the way business was executed and how middle level managers guided their reports.

The supervisors for various sections arranged staff performance reviews and I requested them to include me in the reviews. I neither intended nor did attend all the reviews. I selected the ones I would review on the basis of the information I was likely to gather at the review from either the reviewer or the person being reviewed. My role was that of an observer.

One particular review was with an employee who had been in the company for many years. He was well regarded and had a reputation for doing good work in his core area. The company had decided to expand into another product line and this employee had collaboratively agreed to lead the development of the new section and the product. However, the section was not developing as quickly as expected. Although the product was experiencing some minor technical ‘teething’ issues it was not perceived that these were restricting the sections development. The employee's core area of work was also tending to stagnate.

The employee's immediate supervisor was very intent on being seen as successful. If something failed then she tended to distance herself and not voluntarily take on risky opportunities. She was also disinclined to help other peers unless she was seen to be the ‘saviour’ but would happily take on other subordinates who were seen as achievers.

The employee’s overall performance was not as good as it had been prior to his taking on the additional responsibility of developing the new product. During the interview the employee made the comment that he felt ‘pushed and pulled’ between the two roles. Further discussion revealed that this was causing him to feel ‘paralyzed’ with any work he was undertaking. He had no clear direction about prioritizing his work. The company was very focused on financial profitability from the top down and the economic times were quite tough. His supervisor was also unclear as to how she wanted him to progress other than to say she required both activities to be achieved.
As an observer during this interchange I was able to view the issues without becoming involved in the interpersonal relations that were being played out.

The worker described the work he was doing and said he was experiencing difficulty in successfully completing each task. I found it interesting that he talked about how he felt when doing work. This was unusual in a technical organization where my expectation was for people to describe issues as quantifiable facts. The comment that caught my attention was that he felt ‘pushed and pulled’ between the two tasks.

11.3 Reflection and learning

In the earlier part of this thesis I referred to a development of the Grubb Institute concept that illustrated the interaction of Role, System and Person. To extend Reed’s model (1976) to the conglomerate of simple systems that locate a person within society gives rise to what I have called a role daisy. That is, the boundaries between systems and roles are clearly defined and the model looks like a daisy flower (This is described fully in Chapter 8 of this thesis.)

Figure 11.1 Role Daisy
I then hypothesised that a complex system is one where the boundaries of at least two systems and roles overlap to create a third system at their intersection. With such a model it is possible to visualize that the third role can be randomly and independently affected by the way either of the two simple systems-in-the-mind are created. This is shown in the diagram as influences caused by the system-in-the-mind that impact on the complex role. Because these effects are random and un-timed the role requirements will also change randomly and without warning. This creates murkiness at the role boundary which is frequently difficult, if not impossible, to manage by the person taking the complex role in response to the complex system-in-the-mind. This is described in the following diagram:

![Complex system and role diagram](image)

**Figure 11.2 Complex system and role**

The model that I developed arose from the interview responses and was further supported later in the research by a worker who experienced role boundary confusion. The participants talked about a feeling of being ‘pushed and pulled’ between two different role requirements. The model demonstrates the interaction of two simple systems-in-the-mind to create a complex system-in-the-mind. It is my working hypothesis that:

The survival of the complex system-in-the-mind is governed by the anxieties that arise from the interaction of a role which is engaging two systems-in-the-mind that have dissimilar values and artefacts. i.e. dissimilar cultures.

For example: a contract management role is expected to:
• ensure delivery of outcomes;
• to a quality;
• to a price; and
• on time.

These are ‘hard’ or tangibly quantified parameters. In this case if any one of the four parameters has to be modified, for example, to achieve the outcomes the price must increase and the time extended, then any one of the parameters may be modified. For example the quality may be reduced to achieve price and time or the time may be extended to achieve the price. There is no one parameter which necessarily has a higher value than the others.

This is contrasted with the principle role of a campus nurse which I researched as part of my masters degree (Strachan 2004) and have considered here in the context of her role. She is expected to deliver similar outcomes in her role and there are similar parameters. However, her primary value is patient care. Patient care in the first example would equate to quality. A good example of this is where she is managing the psychological welfare of a young female international student who has become pregnant. The quality of the care and the outcomes are paramount, she will almost consider the price and time constraints to be inconsequential as long as she can achieve a result of a student who is managing the anxieties of being away from home with the significant additional anxiety of unintentionally becoming pregnant.

Therefore if the campus nurse has a complex role as a contract manager as well as a campus nurse she will be placed in the position of having to arrive at a compromise between the two systems/cultures. The complex system-in-the-mind that occurs at the intersection of the two simple systems-in-the-mind is responded to by the complex role-in-the-mind. However, the complex role-in-the-mind is dynamic. Its boundaries are continually changing as a result of influences from each system, over which she has no control. Where the nurse perceives these as random and uncontrollable changes she may not be able to adequately manage her anxiety. This could be perceived as the ‘pushing and pulling’ reported by my research participants that resulted in them being unable to satisfactorily deliver the complex role-in-the-mind. The power of the anxiety effect is shown because neither of the two simple systems-in-the-mind is directly affected by the opposing system but the role holder cannot satisfactorily take them up as simple roles-in-the-mind. Where the nurse is able to adequately manage the anxiety, the complex role-in-the-mind will collapse and the simple roles-in-the-mind will be satisfactorily discharged.
The complex system is a system-in-the-mind as it is the way the nurse interprets the interaction of the two simple systems. The simple systems will also be systems-in-the-mind but they also seem capable of being adequately described such that other people can adopt similar views within the system. This does not appear to be the case with a complex system. There seems to be a greater likelihood of a difference in the perception of a complex system and its role. For example the overall system of the university is capable of being described reasonably accurately such that most other people will understand what the organization is and does. As such it is a simple system that can be compared with other universities. However, nested under the organization of the university are a myriad other smaller systems/organizations such as Financial Services, Human Services and Property Services. Where these are simple systems they can reasonably be described easily. However, where they create complex systems and roles (through the same person taking on multiple roles from multiple systems) they are far less able to be described as they exist quite differently in each role holder’s minds and are dynamic. Each complex system is a unique combination of simple systems that may only be affected by the role holder’s interpretation. With a complex system in the role holders mind what is unmanageable today may change and become manageable tomorrow.

At this point I needed to understand more about the effect two different cultures have on the role people take up in each of them; then the effect on people when the cultures intersect. I was prompted by Borwick’s, 2007 example of a Swedish Manager’s role conflict, referred to in Chapter Nine. In this example while the manager was managing his anxiety of role conflict his approach may not, in most cases, be the most desirable way to manage conflict. That is to flee from the conflict by splitting off one of the systems.

The next chapter recounts how I explored the interaction between different organizational cultures and then considers how that exploration may be applied to the research.
Chapter 12 – An exploration of intersecting cultural boundaries

12.1 Knowledge

I was developing an understanding of how two systems-in-the-mind and their respective roles may interact when people simultaneously take up a role in each system. My literature research led me to consider that the culture of each system was also an important consideration. (Czander 1993; Hirschhorn 1988; Schein 1996) and other authors address cultural issues from many different viewpoints. This prompted me to question if cultural dissimilarities between systems may also disrupt the taking and giving of a role.

12.2 The activity

During the interviews I found that people had difficulty in describing the organizational culture. In several instances the use of a metaphor to describe the culture did make it easier. However, this prompted me to reflect on my own upbringing as an English boy in Australia. This was a case where there were two cultures that had many obvious artefacts. My thought was that in describing this - understanding the role taken up at the intersection of two cultures/systems - would be easier than having to first identify the artefacts of, say, Human Services and Financial Services departments. The two systems, British middle class society and Australian middle class society are organizational systems in their own right. Thus the different ways people take up complex roles at the intersection of the two cultures would directly inform my study of the complex role and complex system of part-time contract managers. The next chapter explores the interaction of national cultures.

As part of developing In the early 1950’s I emigrated from the UK with my parents and elder brother who was eight years old. I believe we emigrated to leave the scene of a family tragedy, to start a new life. Thus very high anxiety was continually subject to memories being prompted. I was nine months old and do not believe I consciously adopted or discarded any aspects of UK culture on my own behalf during that period. I did not return to the UK for nearly twenty years. However, my upbringing was very much that of an ‘English boy’ (my description of myself). This was to the extent that cultural artefacts such as ‘speaking the Queen’s English’, dress, celebrations and such like were encouraged. Other celebrations such as Empire day, the precursor to Australia Day, had little or no relevance in our lives. We maintained contact with our British culture through the normal communication channel of the day, "Royal Mail". While we had a telephone it was not for international calls, they were too
expensive. Consequently contact by mail was slow and also remote. Nuances of change in the complex role we took up and the simple role our British friends and relations took up were unlikely to be noticed. My mother was always quick to correct anyone who asked if we were ‘ten pound poms’. This contained a veiled suggestion that we were ‘better’ than those emigrants who were. Perhaps unconsciously we were also not dependant on the Australian Government which had financed ‘ten pound poms’. This made and defined a boundary between ‘them and us’. Thus my parents managed the anxiety of a new culture by making friends with other Britons for their social scene and to limiting interaction with the other culture (Australian) to work and eventually to acquaintances at the church and school where my brother and I attended. In the context of a role daisy diagram it is shown as:

Figure 12.1    Australian/British complex system

After about ten years my brother returned to the UK and has lived there ever since. Perhaps this was his way of handling the complex role. The Australian simple role was ‘split-off’ and disregarded as in the following diagram.
My parents returned to the UK for a trip after twenty years. Following their return they commented that even though they had kept up regular communication with friends and relatives not only had the physical surroundings in the UK changed but the people were not as they used to be. They, too, had changed. The simple system my parents had in their minds as part of a complex system no longer existed. It was a fantasy that would not be resolved for several years. The complex role they had taken up for twenty years had collapsed. This was because it was no longer relevant and did not serve to assuage their anxiety. But the knowledge and experience that came from their forty-plus years of experience of British society as a simple role would not disappear, nor would it be split-off as a ‘bad object’. But to them it was the complex role-in-the-mind and system-in-the-mind (an expatriate system one might say) that they recalled from the early 1950’s rather than the reality of 1970’s British society. The complex role-in-the-mind they had assumed for more than twenty years was now irrelevant to their reality. So what happens to this complex role-in-the-mind and system-in-the-mind? I contend that it becomes internalized in the person as ‘heritage’. This is shown in the following diagram as the complex role moving to within the boundary of the person. It then becomes a fantasy to the person and inaccessible to others who may wish to change it. The fantasy may only be changed by the person who holds it as heritage.

Figure 12.2  Split-off Australian system
When I returned to the UK on a working holiday I found that I was considered to be an Australian, yet when I was in Australia I was British! This was despite me considering myself to be British. It appears that my fantasy was irrelevant to others. I did not reconsider the cultural complex role I took up until many years later when my eldest son was in secondary school and we were discussing our heritage and current ethnicity. He declared to me that I was Australian, not British! Because I lived in Australia, worked here, married an Australian, my children were born here and I had spent less than two years accumulated time in Britain. His question was ‘Then how could I possibly be British?’ This was the point, when I was about forty-five years old, that I committed fully to Australian culture. My system/culture-in-the-mind became Australian and my ‘British-ness’ became my heritage. I had resolved the complex role and its associated anxiety and reverted to a simple role by splitting off parts I did not want and absorbing parts I wanted into the ‘person’. My fantasy of the British culture/system was integrated into my ‘person’ as my heritage. Now when I return to Britain on holiday I comfortably take up a simple role as an ‘Australian Tourist’.

My mother only made her transition to adopting Australian culture, when my wife gave birth to our first child and it was very clear my wife and I would not be living in Britain. That is she integrated her British culture into her person and took up a simple role in Australian society. At that time she was sixty-five years old. Her culture then became increasingly Australian and her ‘British-ness’ her heritage. She was equally proud of both but there was no longer any expectation that our family was ‘really British’.

Figure 12.3 Complex role being absorbed in person as heritage
Almost thirty years later, nearly fifty years from when I emigrated, my eldest son married a young woman. She was three years old when she emigrated with her parents from Turkey. She did not speak any English at that point and her family’s emigration was voluntary, leaving the culture they were born into for a culture with values they believed they preferred. However, she was brought up as a Turkish girl in Australia. They adopted some artefacts of Australian culture, such as celebrating Christmas, even though they were Muslim. They also made acquaintances with Australians but preferred friendships with other Turkish emigrants and preferred speaking Turkish at home. However, while espousing their preference for Turkey her parents lived and worked in Australia for nearly thirty years. They returned to Turkey for a few family holidays and eventually returned to live permanently in Turkey. In speaking hypothetically, at one point, my daughter-in-law expressed the view that she had no desire to marry a Turkish man with Turkish values yet she still maintained a strong ‘Turkishness’ as her complex system-in-the-mind. She is particularly impressed when Turks in Turkey consider her to be a Turk and cannot distinguish any difference in her accent to any other local. In Australia, however, she has not expressed any pride in adopting Australian artefacts. For example: Even though she is far more fluent than many Anglo-celtic background Australians in terms of both written and spoken English, even studying English Literature at VCE, she always will revert to the Turkish language if she is uncertain of a word. Similarly Australian celebrations such as Australia day or ANZAC day seem to have little meaning for her.

This is similar to my experience except that her parents did not take up a simple role in Australian society and allow the complex Australian/Turkish role to be replaced by an internalized Turkish Heritage. Similarly to my brother they chose to split-off the Australian role thus allowing their anxiety from their interactions in the Australian role to collapse the complex Australian/Turkish role. However, because they had, presumably, adopted some Australian artefacts during their lengthy time in Australia it is likely that the complex Australian/Turkish role has been internalized as ‘experience’, rather than totally splitting off the Australian cultural artefacts they had absorbed and wished to retain. However, the Turkish culture was retained in the context of a simple role-in-the-mind and system-in-the-mind. In the case of my daughter-in-law at this point in time she maintains a dynamic complex role and system-in-the-mind whose boundary moves from her Australian-ish-ness to Turkish-ness. This movement is dependent on the anxiety she experiences and arises from whichever culture is pulling or pushing at the time. This emotional push and pull is similar to the push and pull reported by part-time contract managers.

As I started to research this aspect of culture, whether it be expressed as assimilation, acculturation, integration, multiculturalism or even apartheid, I spoke at length with a young
Greek woman. I was interested in her perception of her ethnicity. She had been born in Greece and was very young when she came to Australia. Her parents were born and grew up in Greece. She considered herself to be primarily Australian but with Greek heritage. Her father, on the other hand, she considered was Greek. He returned to Greece frequently and ‘became Greek’ whilst he was there. In Australia he was a ‘Greek in Australia’.

I then had an opportunity to talk with a young Latin American woman who had completed a PhD researching young women of Central and South American origin who had emigrated to Australia (Zevallos 2003). The aspects she had considered were their ethnicity, gender and sexuality. All but two of the respondents in her study did not identify as Australian but all referred to their ‘Australian side’. A most telling part of this discussion is reflected in Zevallos’s conclusion:

The relationship between the objective and subjective dimensions of ethnic identity highlights that ethnic identities are both ‘chosen’ (claimed) and imposed by others – it is in the nexus of these processes that the ‘Australian side’ proves significant. The participants think of themselves as ‘Latin American living in Australia’, and do not see themselves as ‘Australian’ because they perceive that others are not seeing them as Australian. (Zevallos 2003, p. 96)

In terms of a role daisy the simple systems of ‘Latin American Ethnicity’ and ‘Australian Ethnicity’ intersect to produce a system-in-the-mind which the women interpret as their ‘Australian side’. This is a dynamic system which continually changes depending on their perception of how others see them.

In the environment of part-time contract managers at the university there is a similar protection of the principal system. One participant advised in the context of people reflecting on the use of contractors:

But in my experience, here and elsewhere, you know, scapegoating and name it as scapegoating, of contractors is usually due to expectations not being clarified properly at the start and lack of feedback about the performance or the delivery of products or whatever as the thing progressed, and at the end. And so it’s a case of ‘See they thought they were the experts, I knew that they were stupid and couldn’t do what I really needed so now we’ll take that product, pay them a shitload of money and then go write our own and do our own thing!’ Just serves well to boost some egos but is very expensive and frustrating.

The comment ‘serves well to boost some egos’ suggests a perceived defence against the anxiety of knowing that someone else can do the work equally well. In the context of a role
daisy and a complex role, the introduction of the contractor system to the person and their principal system and role created a complex role. The anxiety this caused made the complex role collapse as the contractor system and role were split-off.

This is similar to the defences that were raised in Australia with migrants in the 1950’s where Britons were referred to as ‘Ten Pound Poms’ or, if they commented unfavourably about Australian culture, ‘Whinging Poms’. Greeks and Italians were referred to as ‘Wogs’. In the 1960’s emigrants from South East Asia, no matter which of several countries they may have left, were ‘Refo’s’.

12.3 Reflection and learning

These few examples show how people strongly defend the culture to which they consider they belong. Although, over time they will either acculture, assimilate or integrate depending on how they can best manage their anxiety. The following examples from my interviews with participants in the contract management systems indicate that their behaviour is similar. This is supported by a supervisor of a contract manager who described preparing for an interaction with a contractor as:

Like, ‘cos, so many people have worked with the recruitment agencies, and that, over the years its time for, like, ‘perky day’. You know because they’re so perky! And always so happy and in your face! You have to be! You have to have a couple of coffee’s before you start those meetings with the recruitment agencies, particularly the girls! Its ‘Hi, how are you!’ So, and that’s well known and talked about within our own little group! Its like, ‘Its time to get perky!’ (when we are going to meet the contractors)

Clearly the interaction needed particular effort to contain the anxiety of meeting a contractor. The contract manager was also constructing a complex system-in-the-mind prior to even meeting the contractor. The contract manager was also constructing a role-in-the-mind which would enable them to interact with the complex system-i-the-mind. However, I have no doubt that if the same contract manager worked for a recruitment agency they, too, would become ‘perky’ and take up a simple role to interact with the recruitment agency system. This is shown in a role daisy diagram as:
In the first part of the diagram the university contract manager is holding a complex system-in-the-mind. The university contract manager takes a complex role in response to this complex system-in-the-mind. However, when the university contract manager becomes a contract manager in the recruitment agency, in the second part of the diagram, the university system-in-the-mind becomes a component of the recruitment agency system-in-the-mind. This is because the agency contract manager only sees the university system-in-the-mind as a part of their recruitment agency system-in-the-mind. To them it is an integrated component rather than a competing role.
One participant metaphorically referred to the contract management culture in his area as ‘we’d see ourselves as trying to do a balancing act’. Again this is alluding to a dynamic complex role-in-the-mind that is uncontrollably pushed or pulled to satisfy the role holder’s anxieties.

From these examples and the experience of the worker experiencing boundary confusion I conclude that the existence of a complex role-in-the-mind is likely to occur at some point during roles that work across two simple systems-in-the-mind. However, the complex role-in-the-mind that is created is not sustainable in the long term as it creates too much anxiety. I hypothesize that successful resolution of the complex role-in-the-mind can be achieved by either internalizing the cultural artefacts into a heritage from the organization or by allowing the relevant aspects of both organizations to combine into a single simple system-in-the-mind. If this does not occur then one of the systems will be split-off and the complex role and system-in-the-mind will cease to exist in the mind.

The next chapter will consider all the data that was collected as part of this research as well as the reflections and analysis’. It will then consider how this work may be applied to the university contract management system.
Chapter 13 – Overall analysis and conclusions

In this chapter I shall briefly review how contract management and training is currently undertaken. Then I shall outline the approach I adopted before discussing the working hypothesis that developed from the research. Finally I will consider how this research could influence the way the part-time contract management role is given and taken to achieve a better long term outcome.

13.1 Current contract management training, implementation and their effects

The current method of training contract managers consists of providing them with a number of processes which they may then use as tools to assist in the execution of their contract management role. There is an understanding across the broad population of contract managers that ‘human relations’ forms an important part of the contract management role. ‘Human relations’ covers a myriad of interpersonal activities. The distinction is that a ‘human relations’ activity is the interaction between two or more people as against an activity which a single person may undertake on their own that does not appear to affect anyone else. There does not appear to be any available training which focuses on how to give or take a contract management role. This applies equally to full-time and part-time contract managers.

However, in the full-time contract management role the apparent absence of training, in taking and giving roles, does not become a significant issue because the performance of the contract is the principal accountability of the person. The only successful way for them to discharge this accountability is by personally finding a way to assuage their anxiety. These skills may be acquired through their professional experience. From this experience over the years they may then use personal relationship skills to achieve the results they require to satisfactorily manage contracts. Furthermore the full-time contract manager does not have conflict arising from another principal role within the organization.

In the part-time contract management role it appears these anxieties are unable to be assuaged, manifesting in a ‘push-pull’ feeling. This intolerable ‘push-pull’ feeling between the primary role and the contract management role then results in the contract management role being split-off. The contract manager is then considered to have failed to satisfactorily discharge their duties in the part-time contract management role.
13.2 A systems psychodynamic approach

I have satisfied myself that a role as given and taken is the interface between an organizational system-in-the-mind and the person taking up that role. Every organization has its own individual culture which evolves independently from any single person within the organization. It is however, a development by the group who comprise the organization. Hence organizational change is achieved through role and cultural change. This is an ethical and achievable approach rather than trying to change a person’s basic personality type. Thus the approach adopted by the project changed from a personality based approach as a result of the literature review and my better understanding of systems psychodynamics.

13.3 A working hypothesis from the research

During their life a person may and will be a member of many different organizational systems. These systems will range from those associated with employment to derive an income through; social systems in the communities to which they belong; their family system which, although it may be very private and isolated, is still an organizational system. These systems and the role the person chooses to take in them can be diagrammatically shown as a role daisy.

![Figure 13.1 Role Daisy of taken roles](image-url)
It is my working hypothesis that when a person tries to simultaneously take up a role in two systems, which are either dependant on or influence each other, they can create a complex role and system-in-their-mind. A complex role may be an unstable construct due to the intolerable or irreconcilable anxieties it creates. This contrasts with the way a person takes up an effectively functioning simple role as an interaction with a new system. A simple role is a stable construct in the mind of the role holder as it has the ability to contain the person’s anxieties to a ‘good enough’ extent.

13.4 What happens when two systems engage through a simple role?

I will now consider how two systems might function through a single simple role. Firstly the new system-in-their-mind enters the first system-in-the-mind through the amoebic first system boundary. This is demonstrated in the following diagram.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 13.2 Introjection of system 2 into system 1**

In this case the person only holds a role in a simple system-in-the-mind. However, the first system-in-the-mind boundary has been amended to include the relevant part of the second system as the role holder views it. It does not necessarily mean the role holder sees or understands the interactions throughout the entire second system. The role holder is only
looking at the second system as an integrated part of the first system. This enables the simple role to be maintained.

Importantly, this demonstrates that all the elements of the combined system are integrated in the mind of the person. The introduction of the new system does not create unmanageable anxiety by simply 'being there'. However, the second system may well create a different dynamic by changing the way the system-in-the-mind behaves. The role holder, too, may take up the role differently. But, the introduction of the second system does not inherently create instability in the role as it is given or taken. Therefore this way of introducing a second system into a first or primary system is likely to result in a functional role being both given and taken.

13.5 Two systems operating through a complex role

I will now consider the effect of a person creating a complex system-in-their-mind. Firstly the person may consider the introjected system 2-in-the-mind as a separate system from system 1-in-the-mind. That is, the two systems are not integrated. This is shown in the following diagram as two simple systems-in-the-mind overlapping each other. The person may then take up a role-in-the-mind which is responding to the combined systems as a complex role-in-the-mind. This creates the opportunity for each of the simple system roles to randomly influence the complex role. The research participants reported this as a 'push-pull' feeling. This feeling then caused them to be 'paralysed' in taking up their role. It appears that this largely unconscious experience reduces the role holder from a fully functioning capability in the system 1 simple role-in-the-mind to a barely functioning and confused capability when attempting to take up a complex role-in-the-mind.
13.6 What is the complexity?

In this discussion I shall use the terms 'supervisor' and 'subordinate' to describe the 'contract managers supervisor' and 'contract manager' roles. The latter terms are too similar and I find they detract from the discussion.

The complexity is derived from the two systems-in-the-mind having different priorities or desirable outcomes that are inconsistent with each other. The inconsistencies have not been resolved. In the previous description of a simple system/role-in-the-mind, any inconsistencies between the systems-in-the-mind are resolved. This occurred simply by virtue of the systems being integrated as a single system-in-the-mind. In the complex system/role-in-the-mind the lack of resolution may give rise to intolerable anxiety in the person.

The person may initially attempt to assuage this anxiety by trying to satisfy all the requirements of both systems. This is experienced as a 'push and pull' feeling which the person tries to resolve by focusing on whichever system is exerting most influence at the time. It may be imagined that the boundary between the system influences and the complex role oscillate according to the power of the influence. Ultimately this instability is unsustainable when the level of anxiety becomes intolerable. At this point the complex
system-in-their-mind collapses, reverting to a simple role that only incorporates one system-in-the-mind.

The second system-in-the-mind is discarded by splitting off and the person accepts the anxiety associated with failure to discharge the requirements of the second role. This is because it provokes less anxiety than attempting to continue holding the complex role-in-the-mind.

In a supervisor/subordinate relationship the supervisor is likely to require best performance from the principal role (system 1 and its concomitant role). However, the subordinate is attempting to take up both roles. It is likely that the subordinate may attempt to resolve any perceived failure by asking the supervisor to clarify which role is more important. Perhaps the subordinate will even project all their capacity for the second role onto the supervisor. However, the supervisor needs both roles to be discharged. Importantly, if the supervisor does not understand the 'push-pull' feeling inside a complex role it is likely the projection is accepted by the supervisor. Then there is little or no decision other than the instruction to ‘Well, do the best you can!’

This instruction is unlikely to assuage the subordinate’s anxiety. It may, however, create more anxiety as the person feels unsupported by their superior. Thus the second system-in-the-mind is again split-off. Through the experience of projection the supervisor may also experience heightened anxiety. This may arise through a frustration that the subordinate is appearing unable to cope with what the supervisor perceives as a peripheral role. This may occur because the supervisor does not know how to address the issue, or perhaps does not even care about the contract management role. In this case the supervisor may even collaborate with the subordinate to assuage their collective anxieties which they relate to the contract management role-in-the-mind. Thus the contract management role-in-the-mind is again split-off.

Where the anxiety is not caused by the supervisor/subordinate relationship the person may simply split-off the more anxiety provoking system-in-the-mind without discussion and continue as a simple role-in-the-mind within the simple system-in-the-mind that contains their primary task.

13.7 What is the cause of a complex role?

The research has identified that with the participants there is a difference in the expectations of contract managers, their supervisors and strategic managers with respect to the taking
and giving of the role. Whether or not this arises from the different context in which each person is operating may well be important. This is because as long as they essentially operate in isolation it is unlikely they can ever satisfactorily resolve disparities in the context of their overall system-in-the-mind. The result is potentially a number of irreconcilable complex roles and complex systems, in the minds of all participants.

13.8 **Can individual systems be consolidated into a single system-in-the-mind using ORA?**

Organizational Role Analysis (ORA) provides a method for the members of a system to develop an understanding of the many facets of the roles they take up or give. Particularly, the people within the system gain an understanding of how others expect the role to be both given and taken. In the initial stages of the research it was expected that ORA would be a method to achieve change. However, as a result of the way it was presented to participants it may have caused them to initiate unexpected defenses against anxiety. This, together with the absence of any authority for the researcher to facilitate change, precluded ORA being used as a change method in this project. Because of this, in this research, ORA became a research method only.

However, it is clear that ORA is an effective means of collaborative enquiry. Even though the verbalised motivation for participating in the latter ORA sessions of the research was for ‘Stuart's research’, the collaboration revealed themes which had not previously been identified prior to the ORA process. The question then remains - Can ORA be used as a change method to introduce part-time contract managers to their role?

In the case study it was identified that a primitive method of ORA was used to develop an effective organization. The main use of the primitive ORA was the containment of anxiety and the facilitation of collaborative work to develop roles, a suitable structure and to modify the organizational culture.

The wide extent and depth covered by ORA is clearly described by Newton, Long and Sievers (2006, p. 99) as:

> This is no simple cognitive exercise. Not only is the role idea explored, but also the way in which the role holder comes to hold significant emotional roles within the organizational system. and the way the emotional experience of a role has become internally organized as part of what we term the “organization-in-experience” (Long, Newton, & Dalgleish 2000). Real discovery and learning emerges with a willingness to recover emotional, social, and cognitive meanings within the role and its tasks.
An important aspect of ORA is that it is systems psychodynamically informed. However, it appears in this research that it is important not to present ORA to participants in a way which will alarm them. In the case study the anticipated change process presented an expectation of ‘having fun’ In this research, ORA was presented as a collective exploration that would capture creativity and imagination. This is an important difference. Perhaps the research ORA was interpreted by the participants as being ‘held hostage’ (capture) to ‘unknown intangible abilities’ (creativity and imagination). Many people deny their creativity as they fear it may expose them to ridicule. This is a clear anxiety. For example the frequently heard adult exclamation ‘I can't draw!’

The senior manager clearly feared being told how to do his job better or having his subordinates find out, without his direction, how they could do their jobs better. Gabriel (1999, p. 164) in his conclusion to a case study considers the risk in taking an approach which will alarm either individuals or groups and raise their defenses:

> psychoanalytically informed perspectives provide much needed understanding and appreciation of group processes such as these, they ultimately offer little basis for intervening in the dysfunctional individual and group dynamics, Pointing out dysfunctional repetitions of group process and offering interpretations of individual and group dynamics are experienced as threatening to the group which promotes regression and greater reliance upon these familiar individual and social defences.

There is no doubt that ORA can reveal aspects to roles in organizations that cannot be identified in other ways. In this research it revealed themes which had not previously been identified. For example the tensions of a ‘balancing act’ were referred to time and time again and had not previously been mentioned.

ORA does enable participants to successfully interpret their role. Because ORA enables the role holder to understand the entire system to which the role responds and identify the boundary and authorities within the system. Within the context of ORA this occurs without needing to precisely understand the system psychodynamic exchanges or the unconscious psychological consequences of the way a role is taken or given. Similarly the nature of authority is discovered by the participants in words and ways they comprehend. It accords with their organizational cultural communication.

Considering this in the context of a contract management system (System 2) intersecting with a person’s primary system (System 1), ORA enables the participants to identify the relevant parts of each system. However, the person may employ defenses to disrupt the ORA and contain their anxiety within the preserve of the original system 1 role. To control
these defenses the ORA probably needs to strive for the creation of a non-judgmental and collaborative environment. In the case study the adequate containment of defenses was seen in the preparedness of people to consider a refinement, implement it and then change it within a matter of hours, if it wasn't working. In the complex system the person may unconsciously perceive that their initial professional role can be preserved if the complex system is destroyed. They may consider that this will create less anxiety. This may result in unconsciously presenting defenses even though, consciously, they perceive there is more benefit in resolving the disruptive elements of a complex system.

Thus for ORA to be successful, the environment may need to be one of mutually beneficial collaboration. It may not be necessary for this to be the case at the outset, but it must certainly be the environment at the conclusion of the ORA. For example, in the research the ORA was undertaken ‘for someone else’s benefit’ which was the engagement of defenses against anxiety.

13.9 A road map for more effectively introducing part-time contract managers to their role

To conclude this analysis I will consider a way, based on the research, in which part-time contract managers may be introduced to their role.

I was particularly drawn to Bain (in Menzies-Lyth 1989) that institutional consultancy needs to be tripartite:

1. Role Analysis;
2. Structure Analysis; and
3. Culture Analysis.

This led me to consider how it may be applied to achieve change in the way contract managers are currently introduced to the contract management system.

13.10 Structure analysis

Structure analysis is often undertaken in most organizational environments with the expectation that it will solve the problems in the organization. This is evidenced by the frequent restructure that organizations undertake with the advent of a new leader. Because this is commonly issued as an edict from the top down it is likely to engage unconscious defenses and actually heighten the dysfunctionality of the organizational system. Czander (1993) and Menzies-Lyth (1970) discuss this in the context of social defenses against primitive anxieties. The result is that people’s anxiety is increased and because random
changes occur they eventually leave the organization. Similarly to ORA, the structural analysis and resulting restructure is only successful if it is undertaken in an environment of mutually beneficial collaboration. This is because it affects the roles that are given and the roles that are taken within the system that is newly described in the restructure.

I now believe the organizational change I influenced in the mid 1990’s was essentially a structural analysis with some cultural change. This incorporated aspects of ORA but did not intentionally try to address the systems psychodynamics of the system. It also influenced a change in culture through new processes and the introduction, support and encouragement of cultural aspects which were perceived as beneficial and desirable. The particular value of a structural analysis is that it enables the identification of the system boundary. This enables people unaccustomed to the concept of psychological boundaries to focus their minds on how they actually consider the system into which they are enquiring. Because this focus is on an artefact, the structure, with which they feel familiar they may not experience uncontrollable anxiety. They are then able to entertain the concept of boundaries applying to more than just the structure.

These boundaries are amoebic in nature. That is they are dynamic and continually move to incorporate nuances in the system characteristics which may change as the enveloping context requires. This is demonstrated in the following diagram:

![Figure 13.4 Systems within their context](image-url)
The structural analysis process will identify these boundaries as they apply within the contract management context. By collaboratively finding the system boundaries the members identify the entire system as a simple system-in-the-mind. This is the start of establishing a simple system-in-the-mind rather than a complex system-in-the-mind.

13.11 Culture analysis

It is likely that the organizational culture will develop from the heritage of the organizations members. I believe this heritage is displayed by an unconscious amalgam of artefacts as described by Schein (1996). A person may bring a range of heritage artefacts that have been acquired during their life from both personal and professional environments. This heritage is a fantasy that developed from their earlier experiences. It does not reflect the present culture of that environment rather it is their experience of the culture at the time they ceased to be a continuous and active part. They may modify their heritage to suit their perception of any changes to the culture. From their position ‘outside’ it is still a fabricated fantasy because they are no longer an active participant. This is because culture is dynamic and a construction in the mind of all the organizations members. Absent people may still be held for a time as members by those within the active culture. However, over time they will slowly be regarded by the members of the original culture as having moved to some new culture. If they eventually return they will then move through a similar process of acculturation as new members. Thus it is into this intangible dynamic environment to which new members need to be introduced as active members. Extending Czander’s (1993) discussion, this introduction needs to be in a manner which will not cause them to engage defenses against primitive anxieties. Therefore the cultural artefacts of the contract management system need to be identified and conveyed to the new members in a collaborative environment.

13.12 A way forward

The research indicates that a complex role may be unsustainable because it creates intolerable anxieties. The capacity to endure these anxieties may differ from person to person and group to group. Thus it is necessary to use a process which will create the system-in-the-mind as a simple system-in-the-mind. From the experience with the research it is essential for this process to contain members anxiety and for them to be authorized to effect any necessary changes to the system.
13.12.1 Boundary and structure identification

I consider it is firstly necessary to identify the system boundary. This will also identify the organizational structure that is within the system. It is important for the boundaries to be seen as dynamic, irregular and permeable. Members of the system are able to move through the boundary into or out of the system-in-the-mind. That is, they are not necessarily always members of the system-in-the-mind or they may be members in absentia. For example the project manager for a consulting engineer will represent the company to its clients. However, as required, the project manager will use engineers from, say, electrical, mechanical or hydraulic disciplines. These are available to the system but are not always active members. Present-time members may anticipate the effect on the system-in-the-mind of in-absentia members, but only to the extent of their influence at the time they exited the system-in-the-mind. Thus the system-in-the-mind may also include past and present members.

Figure 13.5 Integration of required parts of system 2 into system 1

In the above figure it may be seen that a system is not restricted to a single organization. Rather the system in which the person takes up a role must encompass the salient aspects of both organizations. Then the role taken up by the contract manager is the interface between the contract manager and a single system-in-the-mind. It is not the interface between two separate systems-in-the-mind as occurs when a complex system is created.

13.12.2 Culture identification

Secondly the inherent culture of the new system-in-the-mind needs to be understood. For example, in the association of a not-for-profit organization with a building service
organization, the key cultural artefacts which will impact on the new system-in-the-mind need to be clarified. For example, a not-for-profit organization may have a culture which separates the delivery of service from financial profit and risk, whereas an organization which provides service to the not-for-profit organization may require every contract to be profitable. This suggests the service organization culture would be incompatible with the not-for-profit organization. However, at the contract management level the two cultures need to be sufficiently compatible to avoid conflict.

13.12.3 Role description
Finally the role may be described. All three of these investigations, structure, culture and role should be undertaken within the framework of a collaborative ORA. Then there is little likelihood that a complex system-in-the-mind and complex role-in-the-mind will be created. Consequently the role will be sustainable in the longer term.

13.12.4 Application
As it is essential for all members of the system to view the system congruently, this process should be used to introduce each new person to the system. In the case of the establishment of a new system, such as when a contract with a new service provider is entered into, it needs to include both the client supervisory and customer chains. Where a new employee is introduced to an established system it may only be necessary to include the peer group and one level up. However, this should be assessed on a case by case basis. It is likely that the more senior the person the larger the effective system and thus participants. But it should not be seen as a time for the group leader to deliver a charter as to how the system will work. Rather Schein (1996) advises that leaders will often use structures as defences against anxiety at these times. It is, however, an opportunity for all members to understand the status quo. Then there is a basis for the collaborative correction of deficiencies.

13.13 Contributions of the research
This thesis makes an original contribution to the body of knowledge relating to the execution of the part-time contract management role within a university environment. Particularly, its focus on the application of systems psychodynamic theory is unique to the Australian contract management environment.

The development of the complex system/role-in-the-mind model contributes to a better understanding of the systems psychodynamic complexities of a part-time contract management role. It highlights how the debilitating effect of unconscious anxieties may affect the contract management process. Until this work was undertaken the approach by contract
management specialists was to only provide process or legal frameworks to guide contract managers. This work has provided an additional consideration for prospective contract managers.

Finally it highlights that for an Organizational Role Analysis process which encompasses a structure, culture and role analysis, to be successful it may need to occur in a collaborative environment where the participants anxiety is adequately contained. Such an approach is likely to reduce the effect of defenses against primitive anxieties that may otherwise disrupt the process.

13.4 Critique of the Research Project

Literature Review

The initial intellectual work consisted of the literature review. This was extensive, reviewing more than four hundred publications. The publications ranged from high level psychoanalytic research to discussions about peoples’ experiences in multicultural environments. Importantly these discussions sometimes expressed phenomenological evidence of ‘something’ which was affecting behaviour. I believe for some of these people I have identified a reasoned explanation for some of their experiences.

Articles which covered a systems psychodynamic approach were also important as they were completely new to me as an engineer. This information enabled me to understand the practical application of systems psychodynamics to group behaviour. It also enabled me to apply a systems psychodynamic approach to management without becoming an expert clinical psychologist. Another way to view this is that applied systems psychodynamics is now a very useful tool in my toolbox.

How has my Practice Changed?

As a manager of technical enterprises I have learned how to apply some aspects of systems psychodynamics to the current business world. In particular I now better understand the interrelation of culture with role, the importance of boundary management and how unconscious anxieties may be surfaced and then managed in a workplace environment.

During the course of this study I presented a number of papers at conferences. These papers proposed a series of issues. I also suggested there may be a different solution available than those used by most managers of technical businesses. However, at that point I had not identified exactly what that might be or how it may be reasonably applied in practice.
Now, through the work in publishing this thesis, I am able to clearly articulate the insights from this research. It will therefore be appropriate for the major insights to be published in either journal articles or conference papers. This will share my findings with those who are most likely to benefit from the research. It will also enable this research to be accurately placed on the knowledge map and therefore for its value to be publically and independently determined.

An Overall Assessment of the Research
As with any project some aspects were particularly good, others not as good as one would have liked. Of course there were also some issues that could not be resolved entirely. The following short section considers the good, the bad and the issues.

The Good
I am particularly pleased to have developed a model which seems to explain the complexity of role within the context of a role daisy. For me this is an easy visualisation. In my previous education I had been taught to use ‘motivators’. Now, with some understanding of the systems psychodynamics that operate within groups, I will consider the effect of anxiety more as a hindrance to a person becoming motivated. Certainly I now consider the containment of anxiety as a more important issue to address than only trying to find something to motivate a person.

Because I am an older researcher with some forty years of working experience to draw upon, phenomenological action research was an ideal method. It facilitated my regular reflection on what the research was uncovering. This enabled me to use many experiences in my earlier career to either prompt the next iteration or to provide tacit support to elements the research was uncovering.

The Bad
The principal issue with the research was the movement from an insider researcher to outsider researcher. This created two different dynamic environments. The particular issues relating to this have been discussed briefly in Section 9.2.

Of course the reason for the prolonging the research, especially writing up the results, was unfortunate. Enough has been written about that already.

and the Issues
This has been educative research - initially my education. I have embraced a whole new way of undertaking my practice. Originating from a base of maintenance engineering I have
introduced elements from the psychoanalytic school into my practice. This has been particularly challenging. Not only have I been building on my technical understanding of contract management needs but I have also grappled with more intangible systems psychodynamic concepts. This blending of vastly different disciplines has brought a particularly strong and dynamic result that should have far-reaching effects on the future management of technical organizations. This is because these organizations generally consist of technical people managing other technical people. They are both used to dealing in the physical sciences. Introducing a systems psychodynamic approach which uses more intangible mental constructs, will take these organizations far away from their traditional comfort zones. They will leap into unknown territory which should deliver far greater benefits to their human interactions than any mechanistic management regime could ever achieve.
Postscript

Quo Vadis – ‘Whither goest thou?’

This journey has been a challenge and there are many people who have influenced it. Situations, too, have sought to either deter or galvanize me into trying to make sense from the vast quantity of information I gathered along the way. I read over five hundred different articles or papers by people who had been sufficiently moved to write about their experiences. Some of this information may not have been formally recognized in the crux of my investigation, such as the cultural struggles within a Malaysian school for expatriate children or understanding the process of communicative adjustment during initial cross-cultural interactions. Never-the-less they were considered. Perhaps, unconsciously, my reading affected the way I then proceeded with my thinking. Thus it is timely to reflect on the situations and people because they also help to bring understanding to the journey I have followed to develop some more knowledge.

My study proceeded comparatively uneventfully for the first three years. Steady progress was made towards a better understanding of the systems psychodynamic influences affecting part-time contract managers. I accommodated the expected exit from my employer when my contract came to an end. Then, finding a new employer and adjusting to their very complex organization of five disparate divisions was also accomplished. The new organization was overlaid by the founding directors hope that a pool of technocrats with high level education, predominately PhD’s in such diverse fields as wind engineering, metrology or automotive component failure analysis, could be supported by well qualified engineering technocrats to undertake the ‘nuts and bolts’ work in any of the fields. This was certainly an anxiety provoking time. It was even frustrating. But it was also rewarding as individuals moved slowly towards a new way of thinking and working.

But then the journey became bumpy. My wife’s boss of some twelve years committed suicide about a week before Christmas 2008 and a week after a major confrontation with my wife. His refusal to accept any outside mediation to resolve this confrontation, requiring me to take that role, caused me further anxiety. I was not only uncomfortable with this role but also inexperienced when dealing with loved ones in a business environment. For some six weeks we were unaware that the cause of death was suicide. But then the employer announced it as there were ‘rumours circulating’. This caused my wife considerable distress as she had assumed perhaps a heart attack or some similar ‘normal’ ailment that affects people in their

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2 In about 1960 my school held an expo at which various professions set up work places on the school site to give students a better idea about their future workplaces. This was called ‘Quo Vadis’. It is a Latin phrase.
sixties who just want to retire. Then a few weeks after this we were involved in the Victorian Black Saturday bushfires.

For the previous thirty-five years we had carved our niche out of the country, developing a small mixed-farming enterprise. We had brought up our children in this environment and made it what we wanted. While maybe it was not paradise it was our ‘castle’, our place of refuge where we could go and ‘shut the door’ while we made sense of our mental construct of the outside world. We had watched the fires in Boolarra the fortnight before, counted ourselves lucky that the wind had not changed and as a result made some elementary preparations ‘just in case’. We then chose, again ‘just in case’, to be at the farm on Black Saturday.

When the first smoke rose above the treetops my wife, youngest son and I decided that my wife should leave immediately and that my son and I would stay and defend. It is still questionable as to whether or not that was a good decision. The following twelve hours saw us work through a vast array of emotions as our paradise and refuge was almost totally destroyed. The main house, which we had built with our own hands over more than thirty years, nailing planks, laying bluestone pitch walls and concrete slabs, was saved, but badly damaged. The fire got into the roof space and consumed parts of the walls. Had we not been there the memorabilia of generations would have been lost. Yes, they are only tangible materialistic tokens but perhaps in systems psychodynamic terms very important transitional objects that formed our place of refuge from anxieties.

At the time it was a war against nature, afterwards a psychological trauma when I realised how close to annihilation we had been. Some in the community died. It was the stuff of survival at its most basic. The losses were horrendous, animals which we had made family members, naming them after close friends, all gone. Trees we had planted and watched grow, all gone. The ‘bits in the shed’ my father, father-in-law and I had collected over decades ‘in case it came in useful’, all gone. At this time we were at our lowest and most aspects of our life suffered. The sense of loss and anger at our world being turned upside down was compounded by other significant life events, such as my mother’s death, after a short illness, last year.

It is really only this year, when bushes and trees are casting some shade in the garden that it seems we may yet recover what we lost. We may not even have to wait thirty more years! Even the birth of our first grandson in the first year after the fire did not provide over arching solace, nor our youngest son’s wedding and later the birth of our second grandson earlier.
this year. But they all, as with action research, little by little, enable us to comprehend better what ‘it’ is all about.

The memory of old Charlie added its part, too. He died as a result of the Black Saturday fires some six or so months later at the age of ninety eight. He also fought the 1939 and 1944 fires and lost two houses. He also never lost his memory of those fights, reminding us of what it was like: ‘even the cow pats burned’.

Perhaps his recollections helped us prepare both physically, by galvanizing us into action, but maybe more importantly mentally, by teaching us what to expect. His memory of this fire, recounted in hospital away from his friends and his life, was: ‘it was a vicious fire, worse than the others.’

Sadly when he returned to a temporary shipping container as a house, I think it was all too much. His refuge for nearly one hundred years was gone, he just gave up and many younger ones in the community didn’t seem to care. He wasn’t young so to them he didn’t count. What they missed was his rock-like endurance, his support and encouragement to those who worked hard and his disdain for charity, even when he needed it. He was a very honorable man, an unspoken leader of the community whose values which served him well for nearly a century as a pioneer, would still well serve this contemporary community.

The smoothing edges came from people and my limited understanding of the systems psychodynamic processes that were happening during this recovery from a psychological trauma.

As I complete this thesis Australia is in the throes of another major heatwave and there are fires across the entire country. My apprehension is very high and the logic that our part of the country is comparatively safe does not help my anxiety. The knowledge gained from this exploration into unconscious anxieties makes me realise the importance of re-establishing the community’s psychological boundaries as they were. And in doing so restoring people to their original roles, power and authority structures - the full-time farmers, the part-time farmers, the blockies and others. These systems psychodynamic structures changed to provide initial support, relief and recovery in the immediate aftermath. Now a change must again occur to re-establish the status quo from before the fires. The logic is simple - that status quo is the sustainable environment that had been established over decades.

The Future
This journey has been torrid, but it is not the end. For all that I understand about the need for defined boundaries, simple roles and not complex ones there are another plethora of
questions raised. There is much more to explore about the way culture, as a mental construct will, like a chrysalis, morph into a person’s heritage as a fantasy constructed in the mind. These are only some of the questions raised in my work.

Can a person be analogous to a computer? Hardware, like personality, cannot be changed. Firmware which may be changed but consists of basic values such as are contained in a person’s heritage and software applications which come and go according to needs, just as roles that are taken up by a person or split-off?

How can organizational systems psychodynamics be made so that a senior vice president of a large university no longer thinks it is unimportant for us to do our jobs better or with greater satisfaction? Surely this is paramount in any organization? Does not more satisfaction from a job give less anxiety? If so, then perhaps that releases an ability to confidently pursue the greater anxiety provoking tasks with an ability to just snuff out that provocation like a candle?

These and more are the questions that should now be asked, simply because, once upon a time I developed a value that it is my duty to society to do my best. Perhaps as a boss once described me: ‘You are a terrier that worries at a problem until the right answer is found’. He then re-trenched me three months later because I didn’t have sufficient formal qualifications - performance didn’t count! But that was okay because I was promptly reinstated by his boss!

The anxieties present in everyone’s mental constructs make people do unusual things.

This thesis used the position of part-time contract managers to consider further the dynamics of organizations. Thus its core concept - the instability of complex roles and the need to construct lasting roles as simple roles, needs more study. Perhaps complex roles are necessary, perhaps the space taken by a complex role actually contains a dynamic space that allows creativity?

These are questions for the future.
Appendix 1 - Participants invitation to engage with the research

Researchers Address

30 September 2013

Dear

Research for Professional Doctorate in Organization

As part of my research into the implementation of contract management to a complex organization I would like to interview a range of people who are stakeholders in Contract Management at RMIT University.

I have identified a range of people that fit into one or more of the following categories:

1. Provide strategic direction to RMIT
2. Supervise or have contract managers reporting to them
3. Undertake contract management activities for RMIT
4. Undertake contract management activities for a contractor engaged by RMIT

I would appreciate the opportunity to interview you about your role as (insert category from 1 – 4 above). I anticipate the initial interview process will be for two, one hour interviews approximately one week apart.

I have attached a copy of the plain English description of the project. This description complies with the RMIT ethics requirements for human research.

I have also attached a copy of the proposed questions, there may be others that stem from answers that you may provide. The questions I will ask are those marked with a tick under the category (insert category from 1 – 4 above). I have also attached a short questionnaire that covers demographic questions that I would appreciate if you would complete prior to the interview.

I am proposing to tape record the interview, the recording will be kept confidential. Following the interview I shall either provide you with a written summary of the interview or a complete transcript so you may be assured that I have not misunderstood anything we may have discussed. The summary or transcription will also be kept confidential.

There is no compulsion to be a part of this research and should you be uncomfortable with any of the questions you are not required to provide an answer. In fact you may withdraw from the process at any point should you wish.

I look forward to your participation as I believe this research will contribute to improving the working environment for contract managers in complex organizations, especially at RMIT.

When you have perused the attached information, should you have any queries about the process please do not hesitate to contact me. If you are prepared to participate in the project please advise a suitable time for the interview.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Strachan
# Appendix 2 – Interview Questions

## Initial Interview 1. Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>RMIT Strategic Direction</th>
<th>RMIT Contract Manager</th>
<th>Contractor Contract Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Questions about your work role for RMIT. In the first set of questions I will be asking about your formal work roles at RMIT. This will help me understand how you see your work, how you were introduced to it, what authority you have in your work role and how the different demands of the contractor, your functional unit and the organization affect you.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>In your work role within the University what are your expected outcomes from Contract Management?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>In your work within the University how many roles do you have and what are they? (In the case of a supervisor, respond with your knowledge of contract managers that report to you. If multiple contract managers then an average estimate)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>What percentage of your available work time does each part of your work role consume?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>From your perspective what is the relative importance of each part of your work role?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>What were the good parts of your introduction into your total work role?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>What parts of your introduction to your total work role require more training for you to feel that you are competent.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>How are the boundaries to your work role set?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Where does the authority to carry out your work role come from?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>To satisfactorily undertake a contract management role in RMIT, do you consider there needs to be more/less/the same authority from: -the overall organization -the functional group to which you belong -yourself -the contractor</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>How important do you believe the contract management role at RMIT is to the effectiveness of the: -overall organization -the functional group to which you belong -yourself -the contractor</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>How do you split your work role between: -the overall organization -the functional group to which you belong -yourself -the contractor?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Questions about the purpose of the organization and your tasks. In these questions I will be asking for your understanding about the service your group, RMIT, the contractor and your work role provides. In other words the ‘reason to be’ for these discrete groups</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>From your point of view what is the RMIT’s purpose?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>From your point of view what is the purpose of the contract manager’s functional group?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>From your point of view what is your purpose?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>RMIT Strategic Direction</td>
<td>RMIT Contract Manager</td>
<td>Contractor Contract Manager</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>From your point of view what is the contract manager's purpose?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>From your point of view what is the contractor's purpose?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Questions about contract management training. In these questions</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>I will be asking about the training in contract management you</td>
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<td></td>
<td>have received during your employment by RMIT.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>What is the extent of specialist training in contract management</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>provided as general staff development to the RMIT contract managers</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>you know?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>What is the extent of training in contract management that has been</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>provided to RMIT contract managers you know, other than as general</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>staff development?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>What training do you believe should be provided for contract managers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Who do you believe should provide this training?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Questions about the support that is available to contract managers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In these questions I will be asking about the type of support that</td>
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<td></td>
<td>you are aware is available to</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>What tools are available to RMIT staff to execute contract management</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>roles?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>What support networks exist for your role (if you are not a contract</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>manager than what support do you think the contract manager has)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>from:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- the overall organization</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- the functional group to which you belong</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- your own networks outside the workplace</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- the contractor</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Questions about Organizational Culture. Edgar Schein proposed a</td>
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<td></td>
<td>model to describe culture I would like to outline this model and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>then discuss with you the culture of the organization, your</td>
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<td></td>
<td>functional group and the contractor. I want to understand more</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about the reasons why some decisions are made.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Describe your impression of the organizational culture in:</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- the overall organization</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- the functional group to which you belong</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- the contractor</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Questions about Contract Management. In your role as a contract</td>
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<td></td>
<td>manager, or supervisor of a contract manager, I am interested in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>understanding how you go about your task as a contract manager and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>how you believe RMIT’s competency at contract management is</td>
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<td></td>
<td>generally perceived.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>In your experience what are the general categories of contractor</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>selection criteria. (i.e. are contractors selected on price/level of</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>service/other)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Do you follow a particular process for contract management</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>If so please describe the process and how it is recorded (i.e.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedure manual, visual training etc)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error No</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>RMIT Strategic Direction</td>
<td>RMIT Contract Manager</td>
<td>Contractor Contract Manager</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>What aspects of contract management do you believe RMIT does well?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>What aspects of contract management do you believe RMIT does poorly?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Is there a reason for them to be done poorly?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>How is contract management currently implemented?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>What is your expectation as to how it should be implemented?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Is there anything else about contract management in RMIT that you would like to mention?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 – Plain English explanation of the project with guidance on ethical conduct.

The following plain English description of the research was provided to each participant. Prior to its use it had been submitted to RMIT for approval of the ethics surrounding the research.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT
PROJECT INFORMATION STATEMENT

Project Title:
“A systems psychodynamic approach to implementing Contract Management to a complex organization”

Investigators:
- Mr Stuart Strachan (PhD student)
- Professor Susan Long (Project Supervisor)
- Dr Peter Bryar

Dear <insert name>,

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. This information sheet describes the project in straightforward language, or ‘plain English’. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators.

Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being conducted?
The research is being undertaken by Stuart Strachan who is a student at RMIT University. The research will be supervised by Professor Susan Long and if DIsC analysis is required it will be administered by Ms Karen Delvin who is the principal of PIEAT Consulting and qualified to administer the types of tests that may be used. A DIsC analysis is a method of identifying an individuals preferred communication style.

The project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a Professional Doctorate in Organization degree at RMIT University. It has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee

Why have you been approached?
You have been extended this invitation because you are involved with either the management of contracts within RMIT or you make use of the results or reporting that comes from one or more of the contracts. In the case of contract managers your name and contact details were obtained from the RMIT contract register that is held and maintained by the RMIT Strategic Sourcing and Procurement section of Financial Services. In the case of a person that makes use of the outcomes from the contract your name has been obtained from discussions with the contract manager to find out who is provided with information that comes from the contract.

What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?
Over the past decade the prevalence of outsourced service contracts has increased significantly. The implementation of these contracts has not always been successful in that the expected outcomes have not always been achieved over the long term. This has caused financial loss to the organization and probably made the contract manager feel inadequate in their role. This project will investigate the working style preferences and role requirements of a number of current contract managers and the cultural interactions between contract managers, contractors and the University. Recipients of both contract reporting and contract
outcomes will also be asked to contribute their opinion of their needs and requirements from the contract management process. The object of these enquiries is to identify how best to implement a contract management process to typical contract managers at RMIT University whose principal role is not that of a contract manager. Never-the-less contract management forms a significant portion of their job requirements. The project will also investigate the most appropriate contract management processes that should be used by RMIT contract managers. It is expected that approximately 15 to 20 people will be interviewed.

If you agree to participate, what will you be required to do?
Participants will be expected to provide information at an interview with the investigator. It is anticipated the interview will take about one hour and the interviews may be tape recorded to ensure that a correct interpretation of the responses is achieved. The recordings will be destroyed at the completion of the project and either a transcript or summary report of your interview will be provided on a confidential basis to you. The interviews will commence with a series of questions that will be provided to you ahead of the interview and other questions may arise from the answers that are provided. Other information may be sought by providing you with a questionnaire.

In both cases you will be invited to examine the matters to be discussed or a copy of the questionnaire prior to the activity commencing and you will be free to choose whether or not to continue your participation. Shortly after the conclusion of the activity you will be provided with either a confidential transcript or summary report of the interview. Other participants will not be provided with any information about you.

Some participants may be asked to complete a nonjudgmental tool (DISC analysis) used to teach that having a different Behaviour Dimension isn’t wrong, being different is normal. It is a multi-level learning tool that helps individuals assess to what degree they utilize each Dimension of Behaviour in a situation. The tool then provides feedback designed to help people learn the best way to communicate with each other. It will be administered by Karen Delvin who is trained in its use and will provide feedback to the participant.

What are the risks or disadvantages associated with participation?
I do not believe that by participating you will be exposed to any risks you would not normally experience in your day to day activities.

However, if you are unduly concerned about your responses to any of the questionnaire items or if you find participation in the project distressing, you should contact Professor Susan Long as soon as convenient. Professor Long will discuss your concerns with you confidentially and suggest appropriate follow-up, if necessary.

What are the benefits associated with participation?
It is not expected that any particular benefits will accrue to the participants by participating in this investigation. However, because RMIT University expects to improve the way it manages contracts as a result of this investigation it follows that the participants working environment should also improve.

What will happen to the information I provide?
All information provided by participants will be kept confidential and will only be seen by the investigator and the project supervisor. If there is a need to report a specific finding that relates to a participant, the reference will maintain the participants’ anonymity.

Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if
(1) it is to protect you or others from harm,
(2) a court order is produced, or
(3) you provide the researchers with written permission.
The results will be published in the thesis that describes the project. In the event that some data is required to be referred to specifically it will be arranged by using pseudonyms or by identifying contracts as “contract 1, 2, 3 etc” so that individual participants cannot be identified. Every reasonable attempt will be made to ensure your anonymity in any dissemination of the research results; however, given the nature of the research method, there is a slight possibility that you might be identified by people other than the researchers on the basis of your responses.

All the research data will be kept securely at RMIT for a period of 5 years before being destroyed.

What are my rights as a participant?
As a participant your rights include:

- The right to withdraw their participation at any time, without prejudice.
- The right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for the participant.
- The right to have any questions answered at any time.

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?
Stuart Strachan may be contacted if you have any questions on 9925 2780 or Professor Susan Long at RMIT on 9925 9747

What other issues should I be aware of before deciding whether to participate?
As the investigator I do not believe there are any other ethical issues that a potential participant should be aware of before deciding whether they want to participate. However, if there are any concerns I am more than happy to discuss them and endeavour to reach an agreed solution to the issue.

Yours Sincerely

Stuart Strachan
M App Sci (Innovation and Services Management), Grad Dip Maintenance Management (Tero)

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745. Details of the complaints procedure are available from the above address.
Appendix 4 Interview Schedule
The following schedule indicates the time and role of the employee who was interviewed. Participants names and organizational title has been removed to maintain confidentiality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>University Position</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>L.D. Number</th>
<th>Interview Series Number</th>
<th>Asked</th>
<th>Interviewed</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Other</th>
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