DYADIC DECISION-MAKING:
A GROUNDED THEORY OF TOP LEVEL TEAM
DECISION AND EXCHANGE BEHAVIOUR

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Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour
ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a report on a program of research study about top level behaviour in the context of organisational relationships. The aims of the research study were two-fold. First, the research sought to make an original contribution to the theory about the effect of top level team decision-making behaviour on exchange relationships between organisational units. Second, in response to a call in the extant literature for greater understanding of exchange behaviour in an applied sense within organisations, the current program of research also sought to explore the contribution that a grounded theory-based methodology could make to the understanding of this phenomenon. The broad substantive setting for the research was knowledge industries, and the specific focus was on large Australian universities.

A basic social process of Dyadic Decision-Making emerged from this program of research. This basic social process was found to be central to top level team behaviour during decision-making, especially where matters concerned other organisational areas. This research identifies that top level team decision-making activity serves the practical purpose of dealing with strategic and operational issues at the organisational unit level. Moreover, the current program of study finds that top level team decision-making serves an important role in shaping the longer term exchange relationships which organisational units develop between each other. In this context, Dyadic Decision-Making represents a basic social process by which top level teams build exchange dyads between their own, and other organisational units.

This research program identifies that the level of emphasis on relationship considerations within top level teams is a key determinant of decision-making behaviour and, by extension, the messages which organisational units send about the way they wish to exchange with other organisational units. For team leaders, relationship emphasis manifests in the leadership style which they adopt within their teams. For team members, relationship emphasis manifests in the perspectives they exhibit during team discussions, and is shaped inter alia by the definition of their day to day job roles.
For practitioners, the findings of the current research program emphasise the importance of optimising the relationship emphasis in leadership styles and managerial job roles within organisations. The current research suggests that the level of relationship emphasis in job design is influenced *inter-alia* by the extent to which job roles and expectations are expressed in cross-boundary (lateral), as distinct from within-boundary (vertical) terms.

The research findings have potential implications for organisational adaptation. Top level team behaviour which is based on partnership-oriented decisions builds relational exchange dyads with other organisational units. There is an indication in the current research findings that this dynamic may facilitate cohesive organisational adaptation, because in networks consisting of relational exchange dyads, top level teams may be more likely to consider the implications of their decisions for other organisational areas which have a shared interest in an environmental change condition. Relational exchange dyads are distinguishable from transactional exchange dyads. The latter result from decision-making behaviours which emphasise expediency over relationships. For this reason, transactional exchange dyads may be more likely to foster a disjointed approach to organisational adaptation. The findings of the current research invite further empirical study of the relationship between the nature of exchange dyads between organisational units, and cohesive organisational adaptation.

The theory of Dyadic Decision-Making meets a gap in the extant research about the influence of top level team decision-making on broader exchange relationships between organisational units, and establishes an important link between these phenomena. The current research also confirms an important role for grounded theory-based research in understanding at a more detailed level the social processes by which top level teams make decisions, and in particular how this process is shaped by circumstances and human behaviour in different situations. In this research study, the grounded theory methodology permitted the subtle link between decision making-behaviour and the broader relationship intent of top level teams to emerge.

A limitation of the current research was the fact that the study design constrained the extent to which a range of other potential influencing factors such as differences in culture and areas of responsibility between the study teams could be explored. While a qualitative analysis of the
impact of the other potential influencing factors identified by the research subjects was undertaken, it was not possible within the logistical limitations of the research to examine the combined effect of these factors on the research findings. In terms of generalisability of the research, a caution should be made that the program of study was undertaken within a substantive setting. This may well limit the broader applicability of the research findings to other organisations and contexts.

Areas identified for future research include further ethnographic, as well as objectivist studies about top level team behaviour within other substantive settings, and the influence this has on organisational adaptation over time. Such studies would inform a more generalisable theory about the role of top level team decision-making behaviour in shaping organisational exchange relationships, within the context of cohesive organisational adaptation.
STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other University or institution.

This thesis contains no material published previously or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed:
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PART 1

INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour
CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Many contemporary organisations face external environments which are constantly changing. A key challenge for these organisations is to effectively adapt to new dynamics in the external environment as they arise (Morgan, 1986).

Adaptation can be particularly difficult for large organisations which, for reasons of size, are often segmented internally along functional, product or service lines. Organisational segmentation creates manageably sized work units and administrative efficiency (Mintzberg, 1979). However, in large organisations, the task of gathering, communicating and processing information about changes in the external environment is made more complex as segmentation increases (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Large organisations also face particular challenges developing and enacting effective strategy across segmented work units, and dealing flexibly and cohesively with change (Stacey, 1996).

Chapter 1 introduces a program of research designed to look at how the decision-making behaviour of top level teams (TLT’s) influences the development of senior level exchange relationships within organisations, and to reflect on the implications of this for organisational adaptation. The study also seeks to understand whether organisations can pro-actively influence the organisational settings which influence TLT decision making behaviour.

In this chapter a statement of purpose is made for the research. The context and substantive setting for the study are also explained. Finally, justification is provided for conducting a research study in the areas indicated.
1.2 BACKGROUND

In its development since early last century, organisation theory has emphasised the importance of entities having design characteristics which complement their goals and objectives (Mintzberg, 1979; Simon, 1947). Flattening of structures (Robey & Sales, 1994), empowerment of employees and teams (Szwajczerwski, 1995), and institutionalising models for learning (Senge, 1990), have been important new phenomena in organisational design over the past thirty years. These phenomena share a common goal of improving an organisation’s responsiveness to changing environments, through being able to process new information about the external environment in a timely way, and translate this into effective strategy.

Much contemporary research about organisational adaptation is based in systems theories for organising. In systems-based paradigms, adaptation involves the capturing of new knowledge about the environment in a timely and systematic manner; evaluating its implications for the whole of the organisation; and deciding how to respond in a flexible and organisationally cohesive way (Peters, 1988; Kanter, 1990; Galbraith, 1997). This holistic approach recognises the reality that information about a changing environment is often identified by one part of an organisational system, but may have important implications for other parts of the system, or indeed for the system as a whole. Examples of research into organisational adaptation within a systems paradigm include the work on systematising individual employee experience into broader organisational learning (Mohrman & Mohrman, 1993; Senge, 1990); on internal consultation as a form of knowledge capture in organisations (Galbraith, 1990); and on design forms which facilitate emergent strategy (Robey & Sales, 1994).

The importance of an appropriate overall design footprint for an organisation’s ability to adapt is well established by the extant research, and this is explored more fully in the literature review at Chapter 2. The literature review identifies the growing body of knowledge about the role of human and technological systems in cross-organisational knowledge exchange and adaptation, and indicates this continues to be an area of focus in contemporary organisation studies.
However, in the final analysis, the internal stimulus for adaptation is typically an organisational decision, usually made by a top level team. Decision-making is a human function within organisations. Therefore, understanding the influence of top level team decision-making on senior level exchange relationships within organisations would provide important insight about how organisations can improve their ability to adapt to changing environments. The current program of research has been designed to explore this issue.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The general purpose of the research is to make an original theoretical contribution in the area of how top level management teams build exchange relationships within organisations, and to extrapolate as to the implications of this for organisational adaptation. The research is based in the substantive setting of knowledge industries. The substantive context is addressed in Section 1.4.

Organisational adaptation is an issue which concerns strategic choice. Organisational strategy typically comprises deliberate or planned strategy, as well as emergent strategy, which addresses sudden and unplanned-for change. While both types of strategy are of interest in the current research program, the primary area of focus is emergent strategy, as this is most germane to an organisation’s adaptive response to environmental turbulence (Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985). The process of developing emergent strategy within organisations occurs typically in a dispersed way, in response to changing circumstances at the organisational unit level.

In this context, effective organisational adaptation would seem to be closely associated with the concept of achieving high level of connectedness between organisational units. Large organisational units invariably make decisions through top level teams (Klenke, 2003). This dynamic invites the question of how top level team decision-making behaviour influences broader exchange relationships between organisational units. In the context of cohesive organisational adaptation, for example, an important consideration would seem to be whether
top level teams take into account the broader organisational context in their decision-making, or merely concentrate on their immediate context.

The purpose of the current research is to identify the way in which top level team decision-making impacts on exchange relationships between organisational units, and the implications of this for cohesive organisational adaptation. Within this broad statement of purpose, a specific research problem has been identified.

1.3.1 The Research Problem

In contemporary organisations, top level teams may take the form of directorates, executive groups, management teams, or guiding coalitions (Klenke, 2003). Irrespective of their title, top level teams share a common set of challenges associated with making decisions through groups of people, and building consensus and commitment to action. In smaller sized entities, organisational cohesiveness can be facilitated through having a single top level team whose role *inter alia* is to ensure organisational cohesiveness. Somewhat paradoxically, as organisations become larger and segment themselves into organisational units - each with their own top level team – there is potential for organisations to lose an important enabler of organisational cohesiveness if multiple top level teams take a differentiated, rather than whole-of-organisation focus.

The research problem, therefore, is associated with the fact that organisational design, top level team decision-making, and organisational adaptation are conceptually linked, as illustrated in Figure 1.1. Therefore, the research problem can be expressed as being to develop a greater understanding about the way that top level team decision-making behaviour influences relationships between organisational units. Researching this problem is important of itself. Moreover, the research has potential to add to the understanding about factors which influence effective organisational adaptation, as well as considerations for effective organisational design in this context.
1.3.2 The Research Questions

A comprehensive review of the extant literature has been undertaken to frame the current program of research. The literature review findings are set out in detail in Chapter 2.

The literature review identifies a comprehensive body of extant research in relation to a range of phenomena which are inherent in the research problem. However, two important findings from the literature review are:

- a specific gap in the extant research about the influence of top level team decision-making behaviour on exchange relationships between organisational units

- a call by the research community for greater attention to studying organisational exchange relationships under authentic, real-life conditions

Therefore, the research questions for the current program of study are concerned with making both an original contribution to theory of organisational exchange, as well as making an original contribution to research methodology in this area of organisational study.
Chapter 1: Overview of the Research

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour

The research questions are:

**Research Question 1:**

How does top level team decision-making behaviour influence exchange relationships between organisational units?

**Research Question 2:**

How will an innovative methodology such as grounded theory provide new insight into organisational exchange dynamics?

The current program of research is based within a particular substantive setting. This setting is now discussed.

1.4 RELEVANT SUBSTANTIVE SETTING

The current research program is principally concerned with large organisations, where the challenges of organisational cohesion are particularly pronounced. Large organisations typically comprise a number of top level teams, which simultaneously engage in decision-making about changes in the organisational environment.

Within the broad prescription of large organisations, the particular substantive area of interest for the current research program is knowledge-based industries.

Research by Pettigrew and Fenton (2000) identifies that the increasing knowledge component in jobs is a significant issue facing organisations in the 21st Century. In this regard, an important post-1980’s phenomenon has been the emergence of so-called knowledge industries. These are industries which compete on the basis of the specialist expertise vested in their employees. While the professions have traditionally been regarded as areas of
knowledge work, the emergence of the consultancy firm in the latter part of the 20th century arguably heralded the emergence of industries based around knowledge. The increase in technological innovation over the past 30 years has added to the knowledge component in many (if not all) occupations, with more mechanical aspects of jobs being increasingly automated and systematised (Handy, 1996). Greater understanding about adaptation in increasingly knowledge-based work environments would therefore appear to be of both current and future relevance to management practice.

Pettigrew and Fenton (2000) argue that the development of knowledge industries has been driven by the impact of globalisation on markets, and the emergence of entities competing in a global context on the basis of having pre-eminent expertise. Knowledge industries typically comprise firms which pursue excellence in their field through the creation of internal knowledge networks around their chosen discipline (Limerick, Cunnington & Crowther, 2002).

In knowledge industries, a central component of successful adaptation is the ability to create knowledge networks, which configure and reconfigure to meet changing environmental circumstances (Pettigrew & Fenton, 2002). In knowledge industries, the organisational design challenge is to develop centres of excellence which are able to network with other centres of excellence. Network creation typically occurs both within the entity as well as externally, for example in the form of alliances with entities which have a related and complementary expertise within an industry (Easton & Araujo, 1994).

The extant literature indicates that the importance of networking lies in the ability it gives entities to link together their internal sources of expertise to provide superior client service (Limerick et al., 2002; Ashkenas et al., 1995; Rothschild, 1993). Knowledge industry firms compete on the basis of having superior capability vested in the knowledge and expertise which is “embrained” (Grant, 1996: 494) in individual employees; and in the ability to link employee expertise in a flexible way to meet customer needs (Inkpen, 1996).
The particular knowledge industry chosen for the current research program is Australian universities. The university sector in Australia is an interesting case of a knowledge-based sector which faces particular challenges in effective network-building. While many firms in knowledge industries are relatively small and are therefore able to manage internal networks effectively, the difficulty of networking increases exponentially with organisational size. Moreover, Australian universities face important external challenges relating to changing client needs; the impact of globalisation on tertiary education and research; and more demanding competitive settings within the sector. In this context, the playing field for Australian universities has been continuously changing over the past 15 years, and will arguably continue to do so.

The current program of study therefore focuses on Australian universities, as good examples of large organisations within the knowledge sector which face concurrent challenges of size, complexity and environmental uncertainty. This sector is considered to be especially relevant for a study of how effectively organisations adapt to changes in their environment through the activities of their top level decision-making teams. In the context of the extant literature discussed in Chapter 2, the effect of top level decision-making on network-building and adaptation in Australian universities is especially of interest.

The current challenges facing the university sector in Australia are now discussed.

1.5 THE AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY SECTOR

The following is an outline of the current context and challenges facing the university sector in Australia, which are germane to the current research study.
1.5.1 Higher Education Reforms

In the context of sweeping social and economic changes in Australian society, the Australian Government in 2004-5 developed a blueprint for the Higher Education (HE) sector, entitled “Backing Australia’s Future”. The blueprint comprised a commitment to increase funding for the sector, which was contingent on reforms to address a perceived need to improve quality and standards in order to be internationally competitive.

Education Minister Nelson, in his 2005 introduction of the HE reforms cited “globalisation, massification of higher education, a revolution in communications and the need for lifelong learning” as drivers for reform. The Minister indicated:

“We must appreciate that these changes are driven by a world of higher education in which increasingly the only benchmarks that count are international ones. Australian universities are on a long-term collision course with mediocrity that can only be avoided by embracing change now.” (http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au)

Public funding has traditionally represented a substantial portion of the financial operating base for Australian universities. On the important question of on-going public funding, Minister Nelson identified a need to move away from “the ‘one size fits all’ funding and regulatory straightjacket”.

Under the commonwealth government HE changes (Nelson, 2005); increased funding of $1.5 billion over four years was contingent upon implementation of the following broad reforms:

- an increase in student contributions to their higher education costs (to an average 27%)
- an increase in loan provisioning for students to assist with their higher education costs
- an increase in capacity for universities to set their own fees and attract full fee paying students
- a greater emphasis on cross-sectoral collaboration between higher education providers
- a greater emphasis on quality in research and teaching
- a greater emphasis on allocating public funding for university research on the basis of quality and outcomes
- an improvement in productivity within the sector
These reforms have distinctive implications for the environment in which Australian universities operate. These implications are now examined.

### 1.5.2 Implications for Australian Universities

The reforms outlined in Section 1.5.1 are anticipated to have a number of important ramifications for Australian universities.

The increased emphasis on students contributing to their own education costs is expected to make students more selective when choosing education providers, and more demanding in terms of teaching standards and quality. This pressure is likely to be further increased by universities having higher proportions of full-fee paying students, some of whom will pay in excess of $100,000 to complete qualifications in some disciplines. Moreover, the increasing emphasis on user pay *per-se* is expected to reduce the numbers of tertiary students overall, making it more competitive for universities to attract student clients in a declining domestic market.

There are also ramifications for the linking of public resourcing to quality research outcomes, and cross-sector collaboration. Universities will be required to place greater emphasis on partnering with other universities, government agencies, and the private sector in developing research and educational programs.

Finally, the changing dynamic in terms of funding arrangements implies a need to manage costs more effectively and improve employee productivity, in a sector where competition is increasing, both domestically and internationally.

The significant changes facing universities have particular implications for research into organisational adaptation within the sector. These implications are now canvassed.
1.5.3 Environmental Adaptation in Australian Universities

The imperatives outlined represent a number of significant challenges for Australian universities. In particular, the changing environment infers a need for universities to create greater capacity for organisational nimbleness and flexibility. Such capacity will enable universities to better meet changing client (including student) needs, and to identify and respond to new opportunities and challenges within a global competitive context. This imperative, in turn, implies the need for greater emphasis on collaboration and partnership-building, both within universities and with external entities.

Universities are good examples of institutions whose expertise and knowledge is organisationally dispersed. In examining indicative structural arrangements within Australian universities, the researcher identified that it is not uncommon for academic and research expertise to be segmented across as many as 20-30 separate organisational units (faculties/schools/institutes). This high degree of expertise differentiation has been appropriate in a sector traditionally resourced substantially through public funding based on student loads and research activities. However, expertise differentiation does present challenges for universities in responding to an increasingly market-driven system, where there is greater emphasis *inter alia* on teaching and research innovation and flexibility.

The review of university structures indicates that internal administration within universities is also typically segmented, especially in larger institutions. University administrative functions are quite diverse, ranging from research planning at the higher conceptual end, to collection of student fees and maintaining campus facilities at a more functional level. University administrative structures often reflect this diversity, with functions and services located organisationally in like-groupings, within large administrative units. In an environment with increasing emphasis on the ability to connect together academic units to share and partner their expertise, it is significant that much of the functional capability for creating these linkages is vested within large administrative units, such as Information Technology (IT) departments, student administration centres, and research administration areas.
Clearly, in an environment with a greater need for intra-organisational partnering and flexibility, universities face particular challenges related to their size, complexity, and segmentation. Having established the reasons for the university sector being of particular interest for a study about the behaviour of top level teams in the context of organisational adaptation, justification is now provided for conducting the current research in this context.

1.6 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH PROGRAM

In light of the extant research about the importance of network building for knowledge industries, it is apparent that Australian universities face particular challenges. The sector is facing significant reforms imposed by the government to meet the demands of a rapidly changing external environment. Therefore, a research study into organisational adaptation within this setting would make a potentially timely and valuable contribution to the field of organisation studies.

A comprehensive review has been undertaken of the extant literature, and this is outlined in detail in Chapter 2. This review indicates *inter alia* that the relationship between top level team decision-making behaviour and exchange dynamics between organisational units is an area which has been under-explored in the research to date. In view of the increasing challenges which Australian universities face in having to effectively adapt to changes in their external environment, the decision-making behaviour of top level teams in universities would appear to be particularly relevant for current research.

Within the substantive parameters of knowledge industries, and the university sector in particular, limiting and delimiting considerations for the current research program are discussed in detail in Part 2, which deals with the research strategy and methodology.

The review of the literature undertaken to frame the current research program also provides important intelligence about appropriate research methodologies. The literature review indicates that historically, research in organisation studies has primarily taken a positivist
approach. While there have been important reasons for this, the literature review indicates that positivist approaches have had their limitations for understanding organisational dynamics. These limitations are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

To explore the current research question, this study has adopted a social-constructionist paradigm of knowledge creation, and has employed a reflexive research design. The study uses a grounded theory-like phenomenological approach. The justification for choosing a reflexive over a normative research framework is addressed in Part 2, which explains the research strategy and methodology in detail, including grounded theory aspects.

Within the substantive setting and context outlined, important assumptions underpinning the current research program are now discussed, and the researcher’s perspective in relation to the subject matter is outlined.

### 1.7 ASSUMPTIONS AND RESEARCHER PERSPECTIVE

Theory plays a different role in social-constructionist research paradigms than in positivist research. This was an important consideration in the research design for the present study.

The different role of theory in reflexive compared to normative research is canvassed in detail in Chapter 3. However, the difference can be characterised conceptually as theory being the starting point for normative research, whereas for reflexive studies it is more in the nature of the end point. In qualitative methodologies associated with reflexive research, the emphasis is on the development of situational theory to explain phenomena which are present within the social context being studied (Bryman, 1988).

Notwithstanding the decision to adopt a reflexive research approach for the current research program, there was important extant theory in areas relating to the research question, and this was considered to be relevant as a potential source for data triangulation. For this reason, a
mixed-method approach was employed for data collection, although the techniques employed for data analysis were qualitative.

Using this approach, qualitatively-gathered data were able to be triangulated with specific, relevant quantitatively-gathered data. Through this triangulation mechanism, subjective conclusions emerging from qualitative data were able to be attributed a more confident level of authenticity where they triangulated strongly with quantitatively gathered data. Within this framework, the overall study allowed sufficient freedom for a grounded theory to emerge in relation to the specific social situations being examined. This approach was also consistent with established principles for incorporating multi source (qualitative and quantitative) data within qualitative research studies (Herman & Egri, 2002). The data analysis process also comprised development of a technique for converting qualitative data into a form by which strong qualitative relationships emerging between concepts could be further confirmed through correlation analysis.

Important assumptions made by the researcher (informed to a degree by the literature review in Chapter 2) are set out below:

- a voluntarist rather than determinist view of organisational adaptation (Weick, 1969; Burrell & Morgan, 1980) - this implies that organisation can influence outcomes through strategic decision choices, rather than being controlled by their environments

- that organisations are social systems which have patterns of goal-directed interactions, and that these interactions are determined *inter alia* by aspects of underlying organisational design such as structure, culture, power/ control systems, and learning systems (Stacey, 1996)

- an individualist rather than collectivist view of organisational members (Cook & Whitmeyer, 1992) - this implies that individuals in organisations have pluralist motivations, and do not share a common set of objectives, values and beliefs
that leadership can make a difference to the way groups/teams behave, and to group/team effectiveness and outcomes (Lind et al., 1990)

The researcher has extensive practical experience as a senior manager in large bureaucratic organisations, and as a member of a number of top level teams. The researcher has a personal view that - notwithstanding the inherent challenges involved - large organisations do have the ability to build effective linkages and relationships across organisational units and boundaries.

The researcher worked extensively in areas of organisational change over the six years immediately prior to the current research program. Based on experience, the researcher expected team behaviours in the groups being studied to not reflect best practice, as defined by the extant literature. The researcher was aware that the study methodology would need to have sufficient rigour to counteract any researcher pre-disposition.

1.8 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

**Adaptation** - a process by which organisations change strategy and/or activities because of a change in their circumstances, or a change to their external environment

**Analytical memo** - a document which records researcher reflections about relationships emerging between concepts during the process of data collection and analysis (Bryman, 1988)

**Consensual commitment** - in a decision-making team context, a situation where all members agree that in consideration of all the circumstances and options, the decision is appropriate, and there is commitment by team members to follow through on implementing the decision

**Confidential interview** - a qualitative research technique, in which research subjects are (with their consent) asked a range of confidential question by the researcher, and the interview is recorded for data analysis purposes (Bryman, 1988)
**Data codes/coding** - a qualitative research technique, in which the content of researcher observation notes and transcripts of interviews is organised and categorised at an increasing level of abstraction (Neuman, 2003)

**Disharmony of interest** - in a decision-making team context, a situation where team members have different interests in a decision outcome, and these interests are in conflict

**Dyad** - two or more points (nodes) which exchange energy between each other in a constant and predictable way (Lincoln, 1982)

**Environment** - in an organisational context, all of the external factors that constitute to competitive and operational setting (for example laws and regulations; competition dynamics; market characteristics; capital market settings; client needs)

**Grounded theory** - a research methodology in which theory emerges from, and is grounded in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

**Harmony of interest** - in a decision-making team context, a situation where team members may have different interests in a decision outcome, but these interests are not in conflict

**Knowledge industries** - industries in which the key source of competitive advantage is vested in the knowledge/expertise held by individual employees (Limerick et al., 2002)

**Lateral** – in the context of job definition, this refers to a situation where the duties of the position require the occupant to work across organisational boundaries in undertaking their role

**Network (noun)** - a construct formed by individual exchanges which establish deeper connections between participants over time, and take on a pattern of characteristics (Cook & Whitmeyer, 1993)
**Organisation (noun)** - a business, company, corporation or concern, which comprises members, and has an identifiable purpose, structure, culture and systems

**Participant observation** - a qualitative research technique, in which research subjects are observed by the researcher in their normal/natural field setting (Bryman, 1988)

**Readings of data** - a qualitative research technique, in which coded data are analysed at progressively higher levels of abstraction, to identify linkages and relationships between concepts and phenomena (Mason, 2002)

**Relational** - in the context of networks, indicating an intention between participants to establish a non-linear interaction which focuses on joint objectives, and reflects a strong level of on-going commitment to each other (Easton and Araujo, 1994)

**Shared interest** - in a decision-making team context, a situation where the interests of team member in a decision outcome are identical, or very similar

**Story line** - a qualitative research technique, in which the researcher establishes an evolving narrative to describe the relationships and phenomena which progressively emerge during an iterative data collection and analysis process (Bryman, 1988)

**Transactional** - in the context of networks, indicating an intention between participants to establish a linear interaction based on mutual and uncritical exchanges, which reflects minimal commitment to each other (Inkpen, 1996)

**Top level team (TLT)** - a group of senior level people within an organisation, whose remit is decision-making in relation to strategic and operational matters within its organisational jurisdiction – in this research study “top level team” is chosen as a descriptor over the term “top management team” (more commonly used in the literature), in order to distinguish the teams in this study from the very senior executive team
Underlying job role - the role definition for a position in an organisation, usually reflected in the position’s duty statement and/or job description (Oldham & Hackman, 1981)

Vertical – in the context of a job definition, this refers to a situation where the duties of the position require the occupant to work essentially within a defined organisational boundary

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

PART 1 - Introduction and Justification for the Study
Chapter 1 Introduction and Overview of the Study
Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

PART 2 - Research Methods
Chapter 3 Research Design
Chapter 4 Research Methodology

PART 3 - Analysis and Findings
Chapter 5 Team Process Orientation: A Higher Order Category of Top Level Team Behaviour
Chapter 6 Team Outcome Orientation: A Higher Order Category of Top Level Team Behaviour
Chapter 7 Relational Disposition and Transactional Disposition: Near-Core Categories of Top Level Team Behaviour
Chapter 8 Dyadic Decision-Making: A Core Category and Basic Social Process of Top Level Team Behaviour

PART 4 - Discussion of Theory and Implications
Chapter 9 Grounded Theory and Implications for the Literature
Chapter 10 Summary, Conclusion, and Implications for Practice
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The origin of the organisation as a phenomenon can be traced back to the Pharaohs and the Chinese emperor state, where there is evidence of large organised groups of people being used for major construction undertakings (Strati, 2000).

The origin of the organisation as a social phenomenon is thought to be the Industrial and French Revolutions, where Strati (2000: 2) proposes “the majority of people came to belong to some organisation.” The organisation as a concept became entrenched with the development and formation of the modern nineteenth century state (Jaques, 1970).

Turner (1971: 1) believes that from a historical and sociological point of view, as the concept of organisation became more pervasive, the organisational entity came to represent “a distinctive set of meanings shared by a group of people”. While early 20th century sociologists were concerned with particular aspects of social structure considered to be relevant to the functioning of organisations (Weber, 1947), there was a tendency during this period to think about organisations as being entities separate from society. However over the course of the 20th century, organisations had come to be increasingly seen as microcosms of society itself (Perrow, 1991), and organisation studies became increasingly concerned with the behaviour of people. The current substantive research question concerns the behaviour of people within organisations, namely top level teams.

A comprehensive review of the extant literature was undertaken in framing the current research study. Because of the complexity of the issues canvassed by the substantive research question for the study, the literature review drew from a broad and diverse pool of knowledge,
research and theory. The contemporary literature on the organisation as a social phenomenon reflects two recurring themes - the organisation as a socially constructed entity; and the organisation representing shared sense of purpose. Consistent with these themes, research in organisation studies has focused on the system of social roles (structure) and activities (processes) which are associated with the entity achieving its purpose.

As might be expected in an area that deals essentially with harnessing human effort towards a shared purpose, the extant literature identifies a diversity of perspectives on the question of organisational design and adaptation. Morgan (1986; 1992) most effectively captures this in his multiple images of organisations, ranging:

- from machine like, to organic
- from social and cultural entities, to places of psychic domination and imprisonment
- from meaning driven and rational, to meaning producing and exploratory

The framework adopted for reviewing the extant literature is represented at Figure 2.1. This framework reflects the complexity of issues involved around the research question for the current program of study, from a theoretical perspective. To establish a contextual setting for the current research program, the literature review outlines some important place markers in the extant research about organisational adaptation and organisational design, then provides a more detailed outline of the extant research about organisational exchange, internal networks, and top level team effectiveness.

In Figure 2.1, the five streams of the literature considered relevant to the current study are highlighted.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Figure 2.1  Framework for Development of Literature Review

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.
2.2 ORGANISATIONAL ADAPTATION

A central question in the research about organisational adaptation is whether this is a phenomenon which can be influenced by managerial actions, or one which is determined by environmental factors beyond the control of management. Foundational writers in this area such as Child (1972); Aldrich (1979); and Hannan and Freeman (1997) refer to a fundamental argument about whether action or circumstance is the primary driver in organisational adaptation. This debate is concerned essentially with whether organisations can choose their course, or whether the environment determines it for them (Wilks, 2003).

The extant literature indicates that, in reality, most organisations choose a view of the environment which encompasses both voluntarist and determinist aspects. The fundamental question of an organisation’s underlying attitude to its environment is now briefly discussed. This discussion encompasses some important principles of systems theory, which provide a practical framework for examining how these dual perspectives work together in applied terms within organisations.

2.2.1 Environmental Determinism

The environmental determinist view of organisational adaptation has its roots in the population ecology, and natural selection concepts of anthropology. In the determinist paradigm of organisations and their environments, “organisations enjoy virtually no control over exogenous factors” (Hrebiniak & Joyce, 1985: 337). In simple terms, the environment acts to select the organisations with appropriate characteristics and alignments to remain within the environmental domain, while those that don’t adapt are selected out.

Environmental determinism is aligned with a particular ontological view about the environment as determining the attainability of outcomes (Burrell & Morgan, 1980). Gopalakrishnan and Dugal (1998: 148) explain that there is little place in environmental determinism for theories of human propensity for action because “reality is an external objective phenomenon”, and therefore not open to human manipulation.
Environmental determinism as a paradigm for understanding entities within their environments is generally considered to have two ideological derivatives, namely population ecology (McKelvey, 1982) and environmental contingency (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). Both of these paradigms share a view that organisational processes such as leadership and decision-making have little scope for moderating an organisation’s subservience to its environmental settings (Whittington, 1988).

### 2.2.2 Voluntarism

By contrast, voluntarism has its basis in quite different ontological assumptions. Voluntarism is centred on the notion that reality is subjective, and determined at an individual level, according to perception and interpretation (Burrell & Morgan, 1980). Weick (1969), a foundational theorist in the area of voluntarism, holds that the environment exists only to the extent that individuals give attention to it. Whittington (1988: 28) builds on this idea in proposing that, through his concept of “interpretive voluntarism”, the power and constraint of a firm’s environment is determined through the attention it receives, and how much it is allowed to dictate the actions of individuals.

Hrebinjak and Joyce (1985) propose that firms respond to their environments according to where they perceive themselves to be along a maximum choice: minimum choice continuum. The research of Lawless and Finch (1989) indicates that firms choosing to operate outside the accepted paradigm for their industry characteristics are able to obtain superior outcomes to their competitors. In this context, Lawless and Finch conclude that strategy selection may be more important than environmental fit in the success of firms.

More recently, there have been further challenges made to the notion that choice in strategy formulation should be limited to a prescribed range. Maranville (1999) uses Ashby’s (1968) law of requisite variety as a reference point in proposing that internal factors such as the cultural settings of an entity influenced the modes of enquiry and discourse which occur around strategy formulation.
In the voluntarist view of organisational adaptation, the internal micro-level workings of organisations are an important area of focus (Gopalakrishnan & Dugal, 1998). This differs from the determinist perspective where the focus is almost exclusively on hierarchical structure.

In the determinist view, adaptation occurs through rational and reactive decision-making, where individuals at all levels work towards common organisational goals. Voluntarism, on the other hand, is vested in a view that organisational actors are not homogenous in their approach and attitude towards organisational goals, and in reality act through their interpretation of given situations. Silverman (1970: 129) refers in this sense to the collective action within organisations, an amalgam of individual actions which arises from a “network of meanings”.

2.2.3 Organisations as Systems

Between the polar views of organisational determinism on the one hand and voluntarism on the other hand, is the view that environmental factors at any given time will either represent opportunities for firms to shape their future, or represent limitations to a firm’s scope and operations. Axelrod (1985) proposes that the evolutionary biological paradigm of adaptation is a useful construct for considering how firms adapt to complex environmental conditions. In the biological metaphor, entities act in a similar way to living organisms, by proactively harnessing their collective internal knowledge and capability to develop new interpretations of their environmental settings.

An important foundational theory in this area is based on the notion of the organization being a complete system unto itself, existing as part of, and in close exchange with a larger environmental system.

In their seminal work on systems theory, The Social Psychology of Organisations, Katz and Kahn (1978), using a biological metaphor, propose that the key to an organisation’s survival is its ability to maintain a steady-state through the process of energy exchange with its...
environment. A steady-state situation is one in which the organisation is open to inputs by way of new information from the environment (von Bertalanffy, 1956); is able to identify emerging external imperatives; and is able to adapt its design to account for these, while maintaining the essential character of its internal system (Lewin, 1947).

### 2.2.3.1 Organisations as Complex Systems

Complexity theorists provide a practical lens for understanding the internal process of organisational adaptation which occurs in unstable environments. In complexity theory, an entity’s ability to survive environmental turbulence is determined by its capacity to remain “far from equilibrium” (Prigogine, 1980). This is a state where internal design is constantly in a state of quasi-suspension, where internal forces for maintaining the status-quo, and internal forces for creating change are delicately balanced. In this state, forces for autopoiesis (creating order) ensure an entity’s design is sufficiently stable to remain functional, while autocatalytic forces (for change) act to transform the system. This process of change takes place when it becomes clear that existing form is no longer appropriate to deal with new exigencies in the environment.

In complexity theory, forces for self-organisation have their genesis in the complex interaction between the sub-systems which make up the larger entity system (Jantsch, 1980). By exchanging energy, sub-systems go through a process of transformation to maintain alignment with each other, in the interest of the larger system’s functional integrity. The genius for maintaining the appropriate balance between autopoietic and autocatalytic forces lies in the complex inter-connectedness of internal systems and structures. It is through this inter-connectedness that the impact of an accumulation of changes is continuously evaluated, to determine the point at which the forces for self order should give way to those which permit a new system form to emerge (Jantsch, 1980).

Essential to continuous self-organisation in biological systems is the presence in their design of dissipative structures (Prigogine, 1980), which permit energy and stimuli to be scattered in many directions throughout the system at once. Gleick (1987) identifies patterns within
patterns (or fractals) in the complex layering of sub-systems in living organisms. Through the transfer of energy between these nested sub-systems, small changes in areas very sensitive to environmental conditions can produce far reaching, flow-on changes in an organism’s design, whereas a major change in a non-sensitive condition may have only a localised impact.

The role of management in the complexity paradigm as it applies to organisations is to develop the culture, systems, relationships, and processes which foster identification of new imperatives in the environment, and ensure these are interpreted by internal systems in a coherent and cohesive way. These factors are essentially concerned with organisational design.

2.3 ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN & ADAPTATION

As a concept, organisational design is concerned with the internal elements which determine how an entity behaves and functions.

Elements of organisational design include how people and technology are organised around tasks; how command and control is enacted; how decisions are made; how the organisation learns and evolves, and how people grow. Design encompasses concepts as tangible as work flows, to concepts as intangible as organisational culture.

In examining how thinking about organisational design has evolved during the last hundred years, a correlation can be seen between prevailing organisation theory at any given time and the prevailing sociological perspective about organisations as being part of society at large. For this reason, it is important to understand the way research into organisation studies has evolved in order to contextualise current paradigms about design in 21st Century knowledge industry settings.
2.3.1 Historical Perspectives

At a conceptual level the differences of perspective about organisational design which have arisen over the past one hundred years are arguably best understood in the context of their inherent differences and tensions, viz:

- a functionalist vis-à-vis humanist view of design and adaptation
- a universalist vis-à-vis contingency view of design and adaptation
- an ad-hoc vis-à-vis rationalist view of design and adaptation

These perspectives are now briefly discussed and compared to establish a historical context for the more detailed analysis of the extant research into adaptation in knowledge entities, in a more modern context.

2.3.1.1 Functionalist vis-à-vis Humanist View of Design

In the functionalist paradigm, the organisation is regarded as machine-like, and workers as standard units of production, rather than individuals with their own personality, skills, needs and idiosyncrasies. Anfossi (1971) explains that the machine metaphor is deliberate, and is intended to convey the sense of precision, process interdependence, and activity sequencing. Anfossi also observes that a machine cannot change what it is programmed to do unless modified by human intervention, capturing further the automaton-like view of the employee. In a similar way, Weber proposes in his 1922 treatise on organisation, that his bureaucracy model is the more perfect “the more it is ‘dehumanised’” (English Translation 1978: 975).

Mayo’s (1945) findings that worker actions and attitudes were modified within and by work groups is generally regarded as having paved the way for a more sophisticated understanding of organisations as places of social exchange (Ekeh, 1974). More recently, organisations have come to be seen as places where workers contract in a psychological sense, as well as a legal sense with the organisation (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).
Scott (1992: 323, in Strati, 2000) proposes that this more humanistic view of organisational design coincided with a growing recognition that an employee’s experience of the work situation played an instrumental role in establishing their social identity, and in their social integration more generally. This was a marked departure from the view that organisations are separate from society at large, as proposed by the classical school. The implications of this paradigm shift for organisational design was a change in emphasis towards organising workers on the basis of satisfying their intrinsic needs and motivators, rather than simply around the efficient execution of tasks and functions.

Limerick, Cunnington and Crowther (2002: 32) characterise this shift away from a task-focused view of organisation towards an emphasis on employees and their work teams, as the transition from the first to the “second blueprint” for organisational effectiveness. Along with this more employee-centred emphasis was a corresponding understanding that managing the human aspects of change was more important to effective organisational adaptation than managing non-human aspects. There emerged in this period an increasing understanding of the importance of organisational design precepts whereby employees were engaged in the dialogue and planning around change and adaptation.

### 2.3.1.2 Universalist vis-à-vis Contingency View of Design

During the post-second world war period, with an emerging service sector and greater recognition of the relationship between organisations, employees and customers, some organisational theorists began to think more about the entity in an environmental setting. In their seminal case-study research of the early 1960’s, Burns and Stalker (1961) found that organisations, in response to this development, were beginning to choose more organic forms for organising.

As understanding began to mature about the multi-faceted componentry involved in converting inputs to outputs in organisations (Leavitt, 1965; Galbraith, 1977), an emphasis emerged on creating fit or congruence between input factors (including human resources), and the particular environmental settings for the organisation. The development during the 1970’s
(Katz & Kahn, 1978) and 1980’s (Tosi & Slocum Jr, 1984) of a contingency theory of organisational design - based on the early work of Herbert Simon (1947) - challenged the traditional one-best-way mantra for organising. Instead the emphasis moved to fit and congruence with prevailing environmental settings.

In contingency theory, the organisation is seen as a setting for a transformation process (Katz & Kahn, 1978), where factors relating to the work itself, and the human aspects of the workplace, are aligned through formal organisational design elements such as structure and procedures (Pugh & Hickson, 1976).

The move towards this more flexible view is described by Limerick at al. (2002: 35) as the adoption of the “third blueprint” for organisational design, where the emphasis is on adaptability. In the contingency model, effective adaptation is concerned with identifying change in the external environmental setting, and adjusting the respective internal organisational setting to accommodate this. The emphasis is on greater flexibility of design, though essentially within a fairly reactive and determinist paradigm for organising.

2.3.1.3 Ad-hoc vis-à-vis Rationalist View of Design

Research in the latter part of the last century into the organisation of the future took the principle of flexibility to a further level of sophistication, where the emphasis shifted away from formulaic, towards adhocratic design, in which entities organised in a deliberately fluid way.

Drucker (1988) identifies communication technologies as a significant enabling factor which increases the adhocratic capability of firms, especially those operating in knowledge-based industries. In a similar vein, Smith and Kelly (1997) forecast that the speed of organisational learning in the 21st Century will treble, and the importance of underlying work organisation and control structures will be reduced in favour of integrating activities. Moreover, the emerging research on adhocracies suggests that the process of adaptation will also take on a more diverse and flexible character, where this capacity becomes structurally embedded in the
activities of organisational actors, rather than through formal structural mechanisms (Smith & Kelly, 1997).

Both Twomey (2002) and Lam (2000) suggest that true adhocracy is achieved when organisations are able to resolve the structural and cultural issues associated with more organic design. Twomey proposes that resolution of this tension creates generative as well as adaptive learning, as illustrated by the Senge (1990) model of the learning organisation. Peters’ (1988) notion of focused anarchy is one where increasing environmental uncertainty is the driver for organisational form. Miller (1997) refers in this sense to organisations taking on a “chameleon character”, which is essential to organisational adaptation.

In a review of the literature on organisational responsiveness, Quinn and St.Clair (1997: 25) refer to the adhocracy form as “the responsive organisation”, through which entities “are sensitive to stimuli and able to act quickly”. Central to the Quinn and St. Clair findings in the research on adhocracy is “the ability to anticipate change and maintain a pro-active orientation to the external environment”.

This perspective on organisational design has continued to be challenged by population ecologists, who believed there are a limited number of possible adaptive and evolutionary strategies available to an organisation. Pre-eminent in this regard are the configurationists such as Miles et al. (1978), Porter (1980), and Miller (1987), who propose that an organisation’s choices about design are limited in broad terms, and determined by specific factors.

The theories of ad-hoc design compared to rational design infer a quite different philosophy about adaptation. In ad-hoc design, adaptation is a continuous process of organisational fine tuning, whereas in rational design theories, adaptation is formulaic and driven by resource exigencies. During the latter part of the 20th Century, the network paradigm of organisational design emerged in response to the changing nature of organisations and their environmental challenges.
2.3.2 Network View of Organisational Design and Adaptation

Notwithstanding an emphasis on environmental fit in some areas of the literature, pre-1990’s research into organisational design was essentially inward-looking, in the sense that effectiveness and competitive advantage was associated with management of resources within the entity. Analysis of the post-1990’s research into organisational design identifies a similar emphasis on designing to optimise critical resources, but much more of an emphasis on internal and external networks. Pettigrew and Fenton (2000) argue that this development has been driven by the impact of globalisation on markets and the emergence of knowledge-based industries, operating in a global context. These industries are typically populated by firms which pursue excellence in their field, through the creation of internal knowledge networks around their chosen discipline.

2.3.2.1 Significance of Networks

Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick & Kerr (1995) propose that truly effective internal networking requires organisations to take on a boundary-less character where knowledge is regarded as an internal good/service, which is able to be moved seamlessly in a lateral way across work units to optimise organisational effectiveness (Rothschild, 1993). Taking this notion to a further level, Ashkenas et al. (1995) promote the importance of creating a boundary-less character in relationships external to the entity as well, for example with stakeholder groups and strategic partners. Borys and Jamieson (1989) propose that in the network paradigm, external alliances are the means by which organisations build intellectual and social capital in knowledge-based industries.

Orton and Weick (1990) submit that in a paradigm of organisational design based on boundary-less systems, organisational sub-systems are smaller, more autonomous and loosely coupled into strategic networks. Limerick, Cunnington and Crowther (2000: 44) refer to loose-coupling as a situation in which each sub-system or element has a very distinct identity and role, yet interacts in an interdependent way with other sub-systems through collaborative arrangements which develop a coherent organisation “holism”. In loosely-coupled
organisations, the idea of design as being impermanent and reconfigurable is a key concept. This dynamic typically occurs as a response to changing interpretations of internal and external events among internal organisational units.

In the Limerick et al. (2002: 62) “fourth blueprint”, the network organisation also couples loosely with external entities. This can take the form of value-chain partnering, where there are typically high levels of interdependence between partners, through to shared-service consortia, where the relationships are more distant and based on convenience. Within this metaphor for design, coupling arrangements are able to be reconfigured quickly in response to changing circumstances.

2.3.2.2 Networks and Organisational Relationships

The important emphasis in the fourth blueprint is that synergies are driven from the organisational units themselves rather than by the organisational structure, as in matrix-based design. Loosely-coupled organisational units develop collaborative relationships which increase the speed and efficiency of vertical and horizontal integration with other parts of the organisation, making the organisation “lighter on its feet” (Limerick et al., 2002: 65).

Lincoln (1982) provides insight into the practical working of the network model in his analogy of the components being nodes and dyads. In Lincoln’s model of networks, nodes represent individual actors in organisations who undertake transactions with other actors in a dyadic-like exchange. The quality of the resultant dyad is determined by the extent to which exchanges are multiplex and symmetrical (or mutual) in nature. Where exchanges are merely transactional, they create a basic structural network. By contrast, where networks are based on partnerships, they build trust and interdependence, thereby taking on an increasingly embedded character.

Easton and Araujo (1994) propose that in the network view of the organisation, there is an increasing emphasis on lateral relationship-building rather than merely enacting transactions with other strategic units. This is consistent with Miles and Snow’s (1992) view that true
network relationships are not arms-length, but are based on recognising the central concept of interdependence. Pettigrew and Fenton (2000: 6) also emphasise the increasing importance of lateral and informal relationship development, in their proposition that for firms in knowledge industries, lateral relationships are moving “front stage” to the “backcloth” of hierarchical reporting relationships.

The implications of networks for adaptation in knowledge industries are now discussed.

2.3.3 Design and Adaptation Within Knowledge Industries

Notwithstanding the conflicting paradigms at the basis of organisation theory per-se, Inkpen (1996) captures succinctly the importance in knowledge industries of network building and partnership-based exchanges. He argues that unrelated and tacit knowledge are the most difficult to acquire, transfer or integrate, because they are non-linear in nature. Inkpen cautions that in networks based on transactional exchange, the knowledge most likely to transfer across an alliance is the knowledge most similar to the firm’s existing knowledge base. By contrast, Inkpen (1996) proposes that in networks based on partnering, the resultant exchanges are more likely to result in knowledge transfer which adds value for clients at a deeper level.

The concept of exchange within organisations is therefore a central issue in effective adaptation, and is now explored more fully.

2.4 ORGANISATIONS AS PLACES OF EXCHANGE

Organisations by their nature represent collections of individuals. Exchange at the individual level is characteristic of any situation in which individuals come together around a task, an issue, or an interest.
The individual is the building block for exchange relationships in organisations, and knowledge industries rely on the concept of knowledge exchange to a high degree. Theory of social structure (Homan, 1961) is an important concept in sociology which explains human exchange behaviour in a range of organisational settings and circumstances. The central assumption in social structure theory is that individual actions are an expression of the individual’s responses to circumstances.

Two paradigms which are central to social structure research are exchange theory and network theory (Cook & Whitmeyer, 1993). In simple terms, exchange theory examines the relationship between individual organisational actors (including the organisation taken to be a single actor). Network theory, on the other hand, seeks to interpret patterns in these individual exchanges in the context of network connections. Both theories use a configurationist approach, whereby inferences are drawn from social relations, and from positions exhibited by actors during interactions with each other.

2.4.1. Exchange Within Organisations

Building on earlier research in social exchange by Homan (1961) and Blau (1964), Emerson (1964) proposes that there is a central power-dependence principle at the heart of social exchange. Emerson infers exchange relations are the basis on which all wider social structures are developed within organisations. He proposes, for example, that a power-dependence dynamic causes organisational actors to form into networks in order to be effective. In their most rudimentary form, these exchange networks can be seen simply as individual exchange relations connected into sets (Cook & Whitmeyer, 1992).

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is described by Bateman and Organ (1983) as exchange between individuals which is beneficial to the organisation, but not enforceable through contractual or power-based structures. Reciprocity is also an important concept in exchange theory. Deckop, Circa and Andersson (2003: 102) described the nature of reciprocity in social exchange as “characterised by unspecified obligations in response to
favourable treatment”, and as having “a long-term orientation where there exists trust between the parties that reciprocation will occur”.

It is relatively easy to understand how norms of reciprocity may develop in reasonably close knit natural work groups. However, for the purposes of understanding social exchange and its impact more broadly on organisational effectiveness, it is important to look outside the natural work group, and consider the dynamics of exchange in the wider organisational setting. This is the context in which development of effective relationship-based exchanges are important for organisational coherence and adaptation. Relationship-based exchange behaviour within organisations is best understood in the context of the networks it creates.

2.4.2 A Network View of Exchange

Network exchange theory (Markovsky et al., 1988) is based on the precept that networks represent opportunity-based structures, where for example shared investment, goal congruence and interpersonal trust work together to produce advantage for network members (Jap & Anderson, 2003).

Cook & Whitmeyer (1992: 116) contend that exchange theory and network theory provide a reliable basis for examining the concept of organisations as places of exchange, because they are based in the common premise “of the actor as motivated by interest”. In this context, actor can mean individual actor, group actor, or indeed whole organisations acting in exchange relationships with one another.

Network exchange theory is an area which has grown in interest since its introduction to the literature in the early 1980’s, in elementary theoretical work on social structures conducted by Willer and Anderson (1981). Much of this research was cautionary in nature, exploring the potential for networks to be quite sinister in intent. Examples of the more sinister side of social structures include the effect of uneven power dynamics within networks (Walker et al., 2000), and ex-post opportunist behaviour by network members (Jap & Anderson, 2003).
The extant research supports a conclusion that, notwithstanding their potential for abuse (Jap & Anderson, 2003; Walker et al., 2000), networks are important to organisational effectiveness. However, it is clear from the research that networks are situational to the extent that they are driven by the circumstances and goals of the individuals within the network, and they exist in a state of dynamism as member circumstances and perceptions change. In this context, the dynamics of network exchange are important for organisational effectiveness considerations, including adaptive capability.

2.4.3 Networks and Organisational Effectiveness

While theories of social exchange and networks differentiate themselves quite strongly from the traditional resource based view of the entity (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), these theories are part of an emerging debate about social capital as an important resource in the economic performance of organisations (Putnam, 1993).

The empirical research in this area suggests that the relationship between networks and member advantage is ambiguous (Knack & Keefer, 1997). There is general acceptance that low maintenance and enforcement costs are associated with networks, driven in particular by the dynamic of co-operation by which members seek to maintain their reputation. However the payoffs for the network can be quite low, especially where networks are relatively small and simple, and there is a high level of substitutability of members. By contrast, the real potential for collective gain from network members appears to be in situations involving more complex exchange, where member expertise is less substitutable, and dependency is higher.

In spite of the interest shown in network exchange over the past twenty years, Walker et al. (2000) caution that the research which has been conducted in network theory has been undertaken, for the most part, under controlled laboratory conditions, rather than natural organisational settings. They propose that future research should explore the application of network-based exchange principles in more dynamic and complex settings, and suggest the processes by which networks form, un-form, and reconstitute in new forms, should be an area
for particular focus. Walker at al. (2000) argue particularly for empirical research within settings which comprise many elements interacting over time with feedback from changing environments.

2.4.4 Exchange and Top Level Team Networks

The extant research suggests that an important area for future study in network exchange is the way networks reconfigure and diversify, to cater for increasingly complex and changeable environmental circumstances. While this area has been under-explored in the research, Annen (2003) suggest that a key dimension to ensuring the effectiveness of networks under increased complexity is the creation and maintenance of a feeling of inclusiveness. Typically, inclusiveness is achieved through having easy and extensive information flow between network members. From an information exchange perspective, organisations can be seen to represent a setting for potential network partnering at a number of levels - individual, work group, and entity wide.

There has been considerable research into the benefits of members sharing information within work groups (Tushman, 1979). Sharing of information externally by members has been found to improve group understanding of context, by assisting to place the group’s role and function within a broader strategic intent (Hackman, 1987). Indeed, Ancona and Caldwell (1992) found that sharing of knowledge outside work groups was positively correlated to group performance for this reason. Argote, McEvily and Reagans (2003; as cited by Cummings, 2003: 5) established “that knowledge transfer both inside and outside of groups plays a fundamental role in the effectiveness of organisations”. This dynamic is driven by the introduction to the group of new insights and ideas from sources which may be exclusive to an individual group member (Burt, 1992).

More recently, Cummings (2004) has sought to understand the circumstances in which knowledge-sharing within and outside groups is associated with increased organisational performance. Cummings (2004: 363) points to a clear practical message arising from his studies. Based on qualitative comments from group members, he argues “that managers
should be explicit about the importance of external knowledge in work groups”. Cummings drew the conclusion that such sharing behaviour was unlikely to occur serendipitously, due to the competitive dynamic often created by organisational structure and culture. The research suggests that while network development is a challenging concept in organisations, it is important to holistic strategy development.

2.4.4.1 Networks and Organisational Strategy

The contemporary research, while formative, raises some important questions about the influence of network connections on decision-making at the strategic level. While Cummings’ (2004) research establishes some tentative (albeit qualified) relationships between access to diverse information and improved group performance, his research was based in groups of people dealing with operational and technical tasks. By contrast, strategic teams in organisations have quite a different type of role.

Hambrick and Mason (1984) established that effective strategic decision-making teams are critical to organisational success. In the specific context of organisational adaptation, they identify strategic decision-making groups as important linking points between the environment and line-managers. Cummings (2004) suggests that any study of the importance of networks for strategic decision-making groups should examine the full range of indicators of effectiveness for groups at this top level.

2.5 TOP LEVEL TEAMS AS NETWORKS

The concept of top level teams (TLT’s) was introduced within organisations during the 1980’s (Klenke, 2003). Research indicates that in the post-1980’s business environment, strategic decisions are being made increasingly through decision-making teams, rather than by individuals (Klenke, 2003).
Interpretations of the reasons for the development of the decision-making team phenomenon vary. There is a suggestion that involvement of others in decision-making processes can reduce the risk of individual cognitive bias which occurs when decisions are made by one person (Feeser & Willard, 1990). While the advantage of bringing many minds to bear on the decision-making process is a popular theme in the literature, not all researchers agree. Houghton et al. (2000: 347) found that where decisions are made through groups rather than individuals, “teams’ information-processing biases affect risk perception in a manner analogous to their effect on individuals”. In their study, Houghton and her colleagues concluded that teams “often rely on the same errors of judgement as individuals to process information, leading to similar errors of judgement”.

Another explanation for the proliferation of team-based approaches to top level strategic decision-making is the cognitive capability dimension. Decision-making effectiveness is a product of cognition, and a diversity of view enhances cognitive capability (Bantel & Jackson, 1989). In the post-1980’s corporate environment, changing work-force demographics, more complex work, and new organisational forms have all contributed to a value proposition that better decision-making can be achieved by bringing a range of different perspectives to bear. Importantly, the extant research establishes that an important factor in achieving superior cognitive capability through team decision-making is the interactive process used by teams to make decisions (Bantel & Jackson, 1989).

The process whereby teams arrive at decisions is as important as the decision itself, because the process can influence the degree to which team members are committed to decisions, and by extension, the quality of implementation (Guth & MacMillan, 1986; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). There are important place markers within the research about team effectiveness. Among the most important of these are team membership; management of dissent and conflict; procedural justices; and leadership style. These particular dimensions of top level team internal effectiveness are now discussed.
2.5.1 TLT Internal Effectiveness – Team Membership

There is a wide body of research which suggests top management teams should comprise individuals from different backgrounds. This proposition is based on the premise that heterogeneous team membership improves quality of decision-making, through the wider variety of skills and knowledge which are brought to bear in the cognitive process which occurs within groups (Hambrick & Mason, 1984).

The heterogeneity view is essentially based on the theory of requisite variety by Ashby (1956). Ashby’s theory holds that in order to survive, a system must possess internal information processing capacities which match the complexity in the external environment. Ashby’s theory is not unlike Galbraith’s (1973) view that organisations are information processing systems. While member heterogeneity in groups is generally considered to be beneficial to decision-making, the empirical evidence is by no means convincing on this score, with an indication that heterogeneity can be both beneficial and detrimental to decision quality (Hambrick et al., 1996).

Michie, Dooley and Fryxell (2002) propose that whether or not heterogeneity leads to better decision outcomes is determined by the important mediating variable of goal congruence. Michie and his colleagues base this proposition on research by Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) and Wiersema and Bantel (1992), who found that lack of agreement in teams about underlying goals creates political activity which restricts information flow during group processes, and often diminishes group performance.

Participation in decision-making teams is an important aspect of the cognitive and critical processes essential to bringing ideas to bear in innovative problem solving, and innovative strategy development (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby & Herron, 1996). Cohen and Levinthal (1990) argue that knowledge overlap which occurs in groups produces a potential for innovation beyond the cognitive capability of a single individual. The proviso for this relationship is that knowledge overlap is able to be configured through group processes into novel linkages and associations. Cohen and Levinthal (1990) identify recognising and valuing
the capability and knowledge of others as key to knowledge overlap. It is axiomatic that this absorptive capacity is higher when there are high levels of participation (Stasser & Titus, 1987).

Participation in group decision-making is also found to have important positive spin-off effects. King, Anderson and West (1992) propose that participation serves to develop commitment to team decisions, and reduces resistance to change. Participation is also an important component of the social support which is necessary for team members to adopt risk-taking behaviours, such as suggesting new ideas and new approaches to problems (Mumford & Gustafson, 1988).

There are also potential negative aspects to decision-making through teams. Among these is pressure for consensus, which can inhibit teams fully considering the range of options available around a given problem. Pressure to reach consensus can for example limit a group’s ability to harness the diversity of view and perspective vested within the team (Janis, 1972). It can also inhibit a team searching for further information and options, once an initial solution emerges during team discussions.

2.5.2 TLT Internal Effectiveness – Dissent and Conflict

Dissent and conflict are separate but related issues which affect the performance of top level teams in decision-making. Both are essential to effectiveness, and both need to be managed carefully to optimise their positive impact, and minimise their potentially negative impact on team performance.

In the information-processing view of decision-making, decision teams are settings “where information is exchanged, processed and acted on” (Dooley & Fryxell, 1999: 390). Leifer and Mills (1996) establish that information asymmetry often occurs within groups which deal with uncertain tasks. This dynamic highlights the importance of team members having a consistent level of knowledge in relation to complex decision issues. Member dissent is an important
vehicle for bringing new information to the decision process, and is an important factor in building information symmetry around decision items.

There is an innate tendency in decision-making teams for members to conform to a majority held view. This is driven partly by a wish on the part of members to have a sense of belonging within groups (Napier & Gershenfeld, 1999). Baron, Kerr and Miller (1993) posit that team leaders often unconsciously punish member behaviour which deviates from the underlying team view, especially when the team view is also the leader’s view. These pressures create a potential for group dysfunction associated with groupthink (Janis, 1972), and with satisficing behaviour whereby teams reach premature consensus around the first viable option which emerges during discussions (De Dreu & West, 2001). Individual dissent is an important safeguard against these types of group dysfunction during team decision-making, because it breaks the pattern of discussion which can prematurely perpetuate and reinforce member agreement.

De Dreu and West, in their 2001 review of the literature on the importance of dissent within top management teams, refer to the positive role it plays in ensuring the quality of team decision-making processes (Peterson, 1997); its positive impact on encouraging members to resist pressures for conformity (Nemeth & Chiles, 1988); its moderating effect on teams taking extreme viewpoints (Smith, Tindale & Dugoni, 1996); and its contribution to raising the cognitive power of groups (Gruenfeld, Thomas-Hunt & Kim, 1998)

2.5.2.1 Impact of Dissent Behaviour

In explaining the effect of dissent in groups, De Dreu and West (2001: 1192) make reference to foundational research by Nemeth (1986), which suggests that “minority dissent is surprising, and leads majority members to wonder why the minority think the way it does”. Moscovici (1980) takes a more cynical view that the motivation by the majority in seeking to understand is to reject the dissenting view. Nevertheless there is general agreement that the net effect of dissent is to create a diversity of perspectives on an issue (Nemeth, 1986). In a number of laboratory simulations, Nemeth and Staw (1980), and Nemeth and Kwan (1987)
were able to establish that the presence of a minority perspective encouraged participants in problem-related tasks to generate a higher number of original options and solutions. Nemeth and his colleagues were, however, cautious about extrapolating these findings to real-life situations.

Perception of risk is an important factor to be managed in situations where group members are being asked to rely on the trustworthiness of dissenting members who provide new information to a group decision process (Blau, 1964). Research by Eisenhardt and Bourgois (1988) and by Wieresema and Bantel (1993) concluded that dissent in decision-making teams negatively influenced decision quality, because of the politically charged debate which occurred around conflicting points of view. On the other hand, Eisenhardt (1989) observed that in some situations dissent, when combined with integrative decision-making processes, improved decision quality.

Dissent within groups can sometimes take the form of devil’s advocacy, where a member takes a contra position to disrupt the pattern of emerging agreement around an issue, or to test the robustness of the decision itself. De Dreu and West (2001) are more cautious about the role of devil’s advocacy in creating cognitive dissonance and innovative thinking in teams. They submit that devil’s advocacy cannot be substituted for the presence of genuine dissent in teams, because devil’s advocacy is more in the nature of role-playing.

2.5.2.2 Dissent as Conflict

Dissent is in effect a form of conflict, and a central aspect of managing conflict in top level team decision-making is resolving the tension between the presence of dissent, and the achievement of consensus. Dooley and Fryxell (1999: 389) proposed that the traditional view of encouraging dissent during the decision-making process, but expecting members to demonstrate consensus and solidarity once the decision has been made has become outdated. They contend “a modern view is that the strategic decision-making process itself affects both strategy formulation and implementation”. In reaching this conclusion, Dooley and Fryxell cite findings by Schweiger and Sandberg (1991) that conflict is unavoidable in situations.
where groups of people come together to make decisions. In this context, the management of conflict to a satisfactory outcome for all parties is central to the effective enactment of decisions.

Schweiger, Sandberg and Ragan (1986: 67) propose that “on the one hand, conflict improves decision quality, but on the other it may weaken the ability of the group to work together.” Whether or not conflict has a negative or positive effect on group cohesion can depend on the model of decision-making a group adopts. The encouragement of critical and investigative analysis within groups can be facilitated through deliberate adoption of techniques for dialectic inquiry. Where this is a feature of their decision-making process, groups are found to produce higher levels of consensus, as well as higher quality decision-making processes (Schwenk, 1990). Amason (1996: 128) proposes that “to be successful over time, top management teams must produce quality and consensus on every decision”.

Conflict in decision-making teams is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon, and there is a great deal of research into the nature and effect of conflict in teams. An accepted view in the extant research is that conflict can be cognitive and functional where there is an underlying common objective between team members (Jehn, 1992). In this type of functional conflict, a dynamic comes into play whereby multiple and diverse perspectives increase the team’s cognitive power in decision-making, which invariable leads to higher quality decisions (Schwenk, 1990). Team member voice behaviour during discussions is important in reaching consensus and commitment, because of the cognitive sense this creates for individuals of having been able to influence (Folger, 1977). Moreover, this type of cognitive conflict can enhance effective acceptance of decisions by members for similar reasons (Korsgaard, Schweiger & Sapienza, 1995).

Dysfunctional conflict, by contrast, is concerned with affect rather than cognition, and focuses on areas of interpersonal incompatibility (Amason & Schweiger, 1994). Amason (1996: 129) proposes that “affective conflict seems to emerge in top management teams when cognitive disagreement is perceived as personal criticism”. In his 1996 research, Amason concluded
that top management teams can harness the positive influences of conflict by simultaneously encouraging cognitive conflict, and discouraging affective conflict.

2.5.2.3 Antecedents of Constructive Conflict

In Jehn’s research (1994) on antecedent conditions for constructive conflict dynamics, he found that antecedents are single directional. Jehn found that consensus and fit around member values were negatively correlated with both cognitive and affective conflict; and in a later (1995) study that consensus around group norms also correlated negatively with both forms of conflict. In particular, Jehn found in his 1995 study that group norms of openness and tolerance of disagreement were positively related to both the task and relational aspects of group decision-making.

In a similar vein, Amason and Sapienza (1997) found that norms of openness (engagement in frank discussion) and mutuality (joint accountability for decisions) were important antecedent conditions for constructive conflict in top management teams. The important aspect of the Amason and Sapienza (1997: 513) findings was that the presence of these two norms correlated significantly with the absence of affective conflict, leading them to conclude that “if mutuality is established before cognitive conflict is encouraged, cognitive disagreement may be less likely to trigger affective conflict”.

The research on dissent and conflict in top level teams suggests an important role for fair and effective group procedures in ameliorating affective conflict in decision-making. In this context, procedural justice emerges as an important consideration in top level team decision-making effectiveness.
2.5.3 TLT Internal Effectiveness – Procedural Justice

Procedural justice theory (McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992) evolved from equity theory (Adams, 1965), and relates to the way decision-making procedures influence the attitude of group members to decisions.

Thibaut and Walker (1975) proposed that the ability of members to voice their point of view was important to creating an effect of fair decision process. Lind et al. (1990) contend that the perception of fairness can only be achieved if members believe their input is considered properly by team leaders. Procedural justice theorists propose that fair procedures are important both for ensuring the interests of individual are protected in the decision-making process, and also for maintaining a healthy relationship between individuals and their teams (Lind & Tyler, 1988).

Korsgaard, Schweiger and Sandberg (1995) found that concentrating on procedural justice can enhance decision quality. In this regard, their finding was at odds with earlier research by Schweiger and Sandberg (1991), who proposed that there is a trade-off in group decision-making between decision quality, consensus and effective acceptance of decisions. Eisenhardt and Zbaracki (1992) raised similar questions about the ability to simultaneously achieve consensus and decision quality in decision-making. The positive findings by Korsgaard et al. (1995) may be attributable to their research being conducted within a simulated training environment, rather than a real-life setting, where stakes can be higher at an individual level.

This is a question at the heart of the process: outcome conundrum in group decision-making. Quite simply, if quality is traded too far in the name of achieving consensus and acceptance, resultant decisions may be unworkable. Conversely, if consensus and acceptance are traded too far in the name of quality decisions, there may not be the required level of commitment to implementation. This is a central area of tension and conflict in group decision-making.

The extant research on the role of procedural justice and constructively managed dissent and conflict points clearly to an important role for team leader attitude and behaviour in shaping
the effectiveness of top level team decision-making. Since team leaders in their approach set
the procedural and social parameters within teams, the issue of leadership style emerges as an
important consideration.

2.5.4 TLT Internal Effectiveness – Leadership Style

Leadership is an area which has been researched extensively over the past fifty years. The
concept of leadership style has received particular attention in the research, and can be defined
as a relatively stable pattern of behaviour displayed by leaders (Eagly et al., 2003).

Pre-1970’s research centred on task and interpersonal approaches being two ends of a
continuum of leadership style (Bales, 1950). In the post-1970’s world of greater individual
freedoms and pressures for employee input to managerial processes, the research in the area of
leadership took on a finer level of granularity, with a focus on participative vis-à-vis directive
styles (Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

An important paradigm of leadership which emerged in the latter part of last century was
concerned with transformational and transactional leadership. The notion of a
transformational leadership style was introduced to the leadership literature by Burns (1978),
and refers to a style which inspires followers, and nurtures their abilities. In later studies, Bass
(1985) identified role-modelling and gaining trust of others as important aspects of a
transformational leadership style. Bass identifies transformational leadership as having four
components, namely:

- *idealised influence*; a type of personal charisma
- *inspirational motivation*; involving articulation of a compelling vision
- *intellectual stimulation*; fostering creativity by challenging the status quo
- *individual consideration*; attending to the needs of individual followers

At the centre of the transformational leadership style concept is the view that leadership has a
moral purpose, and that through exposure to transforming leadership, “people can be lifted
Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour

2.5.4.1 Authentic Leadership

There are inherent problems within the practical dimensions of transformational leadership, not the least being the fact that leaders do act unethically (Hampton, 1989). Ludwig and
Longenecker (1993) contend that when this occurs in the case of transformational leaders, it is volitional and a failure of will, rather than a failure of cognition about what is morally right. Price (2000), on the other hand, argues that leadership in itself can create a belief within the leader that they are exempted from the moral requirements applying to others. In this regards, Price point to there being evidence throughout history of leaders using unethical means to acquire what they see as legitimate ends.

Bass and Steidlmeier (1999: 191) confront this dichotomy by drawing a distinction between authentic and pseudo (or inauthentic) transformational leadership. In authentic transformational leadership, the emphasis is on behaviour which is “true to self and others”. This is similar to Gardner’s (1990) emphasis on commitments beyond the self. In authentic transformational leadership there is strong emphasis on the processes leaders engage in with followers (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Podsakoff et al. (1990) describe the ability of managers to choose to go beyond the boundaries of their role, and extend the parameters within which they act in the carriage of their responsibilities. Examples of this type of behaviour include choosing to consult widely; encouraging staff about the future; and engendering a positive and affirmative climate within their organisations. This has implications for leadership within teams.

### 2.5.4.2 Implications for Leadership Within Teams

There is a need for caution generally about associating transactional leadership style with poor team leadership, and transactional leadership style with effective team leadership. The research suggests that in general, directiveness by team leaders is not consistent with effective group process. In particular, Janis’ (1972) work on the phenomenon of group-think is based on the premise that excessive leader directiveness within groups can lead to dysfunction, when members feel pressured to adopt a position which conforms to a predominant view. Consistent with this, other studies such as Flowers’ (1977) research into leadership styles in simulated conditions have identified that an open or non-directive style generates more ideas and options in group discussions than a closed, directive approach.
Against this background, there is a small body of more recent research that questions whether team leader directiveness always has a negative effect on team decisions. For example, Peterson (1997) suggests that a distinction needs to be made between process directiveness which can lead to improved decision outcomes, and the more traditional notion of outcome directiveness referred to in studies by earlier researchers such as Janis (1972) and Flower (1977). In Peterson’s study of simulated group decision-making, he concluded that process directiveness by leaders is an essential component of achieving positive group outcomes. Peterson asserts that leaders can have a strongly held and expressed personal view on an issue, and this can be a positive factor, providing the leader integrates their opinion within a robust and open group discussion process.

Transformational vis-à-vis transactional has become a popular and accepted lens through which to look at styles used by leaders within teams. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Avolio, Bass and Jung (1999) is a well respected measurement instrument in research, based on factor analysis of 36 leadership based items. Podsakoff, Todor, Grover and Huber (1984) focused on contingent and non-contingent reward and punishment behaviours by leaders as a basis for developing an instrument to measure transactional leadership style, based on follower ratings. In subsequent research, Podsakoff and colleagues Mackenzie, Moorman and Fetter (1990), focused on measuring transformational leadership behaviour, developing an instrument which measures follower satisfaction with the leader; follower trust in the leader; and follower organisational citizenship behaviour.

In conclusion, the extant research suggests the underlying leadership style of team leaders is an important factor in top management teams because it influences the process of decision-making likely to be adopted within the team. The linkage in group decision-making between team processes and team outcomes is supported in both the psychology based research (Zander, 1994), and the management based research (Hackman, 1990), where there is a consistent finding that emphasis on participation and inclusiveness are important effectiveness factors. These are typically characteristic of (though not exclusive to) team processes adopted by transformational leaders.
2.5.5 TLT Internal Effectiveness – Integrated Theory

The analysis of the extant literature on effective decision-making in top level teams indicates this is an area of continuing interest, with researchers for the most part concentrating on individual components of team effectiveness. For the purposes of understanding the complex interplay of factors in team decision-making effectiveness, a contemporary (2003) theory by Edmondson, Roberto and Watkins seeks to integrate research from a number of these separate streams within a single normative theory.

In a recent review of the extant literature, Edmondson et al. (2003) conclude that management of group processes is the major factor affecting the performance of decision-making teams. They find that process loss (Steiner, 1972) occurs typically through dysfunction relating to unresolved conflict (Amason, 1996); uneven levels of commitment (Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990); inability to reach closure on issues (Hickson et al., 1986); and negative group dynamics such as group-think (Janis, 1972).

Edmondson et al. (2003) focus specifically on decision-making teams at the strategic level, and propose an alternative way of thinking about team effectiveness, which integrates the research streams of team demographics (Hambrick, 1994) on the one hand, and normative theory of how team leaders make decisions through teams (Vroom & Jago, 1988) on the other. In their model, Edmondson et al. (2003: 232) propose that “effectiveness depends both on team composition and on how the team leader manages team processes to reflect situational factors”.

Situational factors are seen as significant by Edmondson et al. (2003: 301), because higher level decision-making teams are distinguishable from other teams in that they face “ambiguous and ill structured problems”, where they must draw on a range of information to properly define problems and create new knowledge. This view is supported by Hambrick (1994), who identifies the variability and diversity of information that top decision-making teams have to make sense of.
Edmondson et al. (2003: 302) propose that a team’s ability to deal over time with “unstructured task streams” will vary according to team stability, and the nature of each task. Drawing heavily on research that in senior teams, decision-making occurs more along the lines of negotiation than collaboration (Bazerman, 1998), Edmondson et al. (2003: 233) propose that team effectiveness in the “team - situation relationship” is dependent on:

- situation specific information – the availability and quality of information shared between group members around a specific decision task; and
- situation specific interests - the extent to which group members have a shared interest in the outcome of a specific decision task

Reflecting on the body of research about decision team dysfunction (Hackman, 1990; Amason, 1996; Harrison, 1996), Edmondson et al. propose that lack of symmetry in either of these information or interests factors may lead to process loss (Steiner, 1972), and reduced decision-making effectiveness. They further propose that particular aspects of the way team leaders manage group processes have a moderating effect on such lack of symmetry. The moderating factors they propose, and the impact of these are as follows:

- power centralisation – the extent to which power is centralised in the team, rather than shared between members – increasing the negative effect of any asymmetry; and
- psychological safety – the presence of a climate of interpersonal trust and risk-taking – decreasing the negative effect of any asymmetry

The contemporary theory by Edmondson et al. (2003) combines a number of important aspects of team effectiveness within a normative model which, while not empirically tested at the time of the current research study, offers an integrated view of the complex dynamics of decision-making effectiveness in top level teams.
2.5.6 TLT External Effectiveness

While there is a large body of research on factors which contribute to top level teams being internally effective in developing partnership-based dynamics between members, there is a gap in the research about top level team external effectiveness, as it relates to building external partnerships with other top level teams and organisational units.

There is an intuitive argument that top level team decision-making is an important consideration in building exchange relationships between organisational units, as many of the issues faced by top level teams are likely to also affect other organisational areas. Within a paradigm of organisations as networks, this would appear to be an important area for research, especially within the context of the importance of partnership-based exchange relationships for knowledge industries established by Limerick et al. (2002) and Inkpen (1996).

2.6 LITERATURE REVIEW - SUMMARY

The review of the extant literature indicates that the question of organisational adaptation is complex, and a number of quite different underlying assumptions have shaped research and development of theory in this area over the past one hundred years. These underlying assumptions have implications for contextualising the extant research and theory, and for determining research methodologies relevant to the current study.

There is a fundamental question of ontology at the heart of theory and research into organisational adaptation. Organisational determinism has its roots in the population ecology and natural selection concepts from sociology. The determinist view of organisational adaptation holds that there is little scope for leaders and managers to determine strategy, because the exigencies in the external environment determine the settings for an entity which provide best-fit. Voluntarism, by contrast, is closely associated with the notion that reality is subjective rather than objective, and is determined at an individual level according to how it is perceived. In the voluntarist view, the environment is seen less as a constraint, and more as a
set of manipulable parameters. This paradigm infers there is considerable scope for leaders and managers to interpret environmental characteristics, and to shape strategy in a pro-active way to redefine the environment for the entity.

The fundamental proposal that management in organisations can make a difference through strategy and action is clearly drawn from the voluntarist paradigm. The voluntarist view of bi-directional influence between the entity and the environment is an important reference point for contextualising the different approaches and theories in the research on organisational design and adaptation. Using biologically-based metaphors, systems and complexity theories are important paradigms incorporating approaches to organisational design which permit entities to pro-actively and coherently anticipate environmental opportunity. Moreover, these paradigms also provide conceptual models for thinking about internal design factors which facilitate an entity’s engaging in a positive way with new exigencies in its environment.

The literature review identifies a number of different approaches to organisational adaptation, associated inter alia with fundamental assumptions about the environment. The paradigms for organisational design which have been identified through the current literature review have distinctive implications for organisational adaptation.

The review of the extant literature indicates that network-based approaches are the most appropriate for effective organisational adaptation in knowledge industries, because the resource base of the entity is vested in the individual knowledge worker. Within these industries, effective adaptation is associated with having design characteristics which permit development of expertise-based webs across the entity, which deliver superior performance in servicing clients. In a similar way, network-based design facilitates partnering with external entities, through alliances and arrangements which extend and diversify service offerings in the market place.

Exchange theory is an important reference point in the literature on developing effective network-based structures which facilitate organisational adaptation. In particular, the notion of dyadic exchange within networks is compelling, as it differentiates between basic
transaction-based exchanges, and more mutual and sophisticated partnership-based dynamics. In this paradigm, exchange activity which seeks to build partnership-like relationships progressively develops an embedded character within organisations. In knowledge industries, this dynamic, in turn, facilitates a pro-active to emerging environmental opportunities.

Because the role of top level teams is to develop organisational strategy, the effective functioning of senior teams is an important focal point for cohesive organisational adaptation. Using the importance of networks for adaptation in knowledge-based industries as a reference point, the effectiveness of top level teams as network builders emerges as a key area for consideration.

The literature on top level team effectiveness is quite diverse. Researchers in this area have taken a multitude of perspectives about factors important to team effectiveness, including team composition, diversity of information and viewpoint, member participation, constructive dissent and conflict, and appropriate leadership style.

A contemporary theory by Edmondson et al. (2003) integrates these factors within a normative model which, while not empirically tested at the time of this study, appears to be valuable as a point of reference for the current research.

Importantly, the review of the extant literature identified a gap in the research about the role of top level team decision-making in determining exchange relationships between organisational units, though there is an intuitive case that such decision-making behaviour is an important consideration.
2.7 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The review of the literature indicated there was an important opportunity for further research into the role of top level team decision-making behaviour in shaping broader organisational exchange relationships. The substantive research question for the current program of study, therefore, emerged as being:

**How does top level team decision-making behaviour influence exchange relationships between organisational units?**

A second and related question which was invited by the literature review related to an appropriate methodology for researching this phenomenon. Such a methodology needed to give due recognition to the fact that a central focus in the research activity would be the interactions of people within a specific social setting, within which the extant research suggested behaviour would be situation specific. It was also noted that the literature review identified a call by the research community for greater emphasis in research about organisational exchange to be undertaken within authentic, real-life settings. Within this context, the methodological question for the current study was:

**How will an innovative methodology such as grounded theory provide new insight into organisational exchange dynamics?**

Part 2 addresses the question of developing an appropriate research design around the substantive and methodological questions outlined. Parts 3 and 4 describe the findings in relation to the substantive research question, and the implications of these for theory and practice.
PART 2

RESEARCH METHODS
Chapter 3: Research Design

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research questions are concerned with developing an understanding of the dynamics involved in the interactions which occur between people, within a specific setting. More specifically, the aim of the current research program is to investigate the social influence processes involved when top level teams make decisions, and the effect this has on organisational adaptation.

As indicated in the literature review, the dynamics of top level team decision-making are complex. The review of the extant literature undertaken to frame this study drew from a very broad range of theory, from considerations of voluntarist vis-à-vis determinist heuristics of organisational adaptation at a macro level, to achieving procedural justice within teams at a more micro level. Because of the breadth and depth of factors identified in the literature as potentially important in determining decision-making effectiveness within top level teams, this program of study adopted a methodological framework which gave due accord to the extant literature, while permitting an understanding of phenomena and their relationships to emerge freely, and flexibly in a grounded way, as the study unfolded.

This chapter outlines the research design in detail. The chapter commences with a discussion of ontological and epistemological considerations for research in organisational studies. This includes a brief history of approaches traditionally adopted in this area, as well as an analysis of their strengths and limitations. The research methodology chosen for this program of study is then outlined and justified in detail. Sampling method is then explained, as well as arrangements for managing research quality and ethical considerations.
3.2 ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are fundamental questions of ontology and epistemology to be resolved in designing research studies about the way organisations function and adapt through the actions of people.

The assumptions underpinning the current program of research - as set out in Chapter 1 - imply an ontological view that the systems of categories which explain phenomena should be sufficiently flexible to take account of the capacity for circumstance and individual action to determine outcomes within any given situation. Taking this ontological view, the notion that organisational adaptation can be shaped inter alia by exchange between organisational members is more closely aligned with the concept of organisational voluntarism than organisational determinism. Moreover, the literature review identified the concept of voluntarism as being central to the view that top management teams are able to influence organisational strategy and adaptation through the process of strategy selection.

Within the ontological assumptions for the current research, voluntarism is seen as encompassing an assumption that within an organisational setting, reality will be subjective, according to the individual’s experience of it. By contrast, a determinist view might be seen as one in which reality is seen as an external objective phenomenon, which should be regarded as a given, and therefore not able to be influenced (Burrell & Morgan, 1980). The ontological assumptions for the current research infer a particular epistemological view, namely that knowledge is based on understanding the way individuals interpret situations as they experience them, within natural settings.

In research methodology terms, the ontological and epistemological assumptions for the current research are associated with ideographic, rather than nomothetic approaches to the process of understanding. This fundamental difference can be likened to comparing what is specific or unique to the individual or group being studied on the one hand (Gopalakrishnan & Dugal, 1998), to identifying what can be generalised to all groups on the other.
Central to the ontology for the current research is the principle that individual cognition and action in an organisational setting is difficult to predict; may be influenced by factors such as personality and individual preference; may be driven by self interest and personal agendas; and is able to be shaped by leadership influence. This differs from an ontological view that organisational members are more in the nature of passive and predictable actors within the organisational setting, who share relatively consistent levels of commitment to organisational goals, and whose actions, therefore, are able to be generalised using reductionist-based research approaches (Hannan & Freeman, 1997).

3.2.1 Traditional Approaches to Organisational Research

The review of the literature presented an interesting picture of the way organisational studies have been approached over the past fifty years, from a research point of view. Lounsbury and Ventreska (2003) identify in pre-1970’s research a distinct interest in sociological approaches to studying organisations, using rich case studies as the research maxim. They point to these studies drawing deeply on the early work of Weber (1947), who placed his theories of bureaucracy within the broader context of social and political structure. An important aspect of such research during the 1960’s was a resistance to normative, high level abstraction of relationships between phenomena.

There was, instead, during this period an emphasis on using theory of social structure as a reference point. Based on social structure theoretical precepts, empirical studies were typically conducted of factor interplay, to develop a grounded understanding of phenomena and their relationships, as they occurred within natural settings. A good example of this is Burns and Stalker’s (1961) landmark research on systems theory, which drew on rich case studies to identify that entities were at that time defying accepted maxims by adopting more organic approaches to organisational design. Lounsbury and Ventresca (2003: 460) posit that the case study approach of the 1960’s was important in that it offered a new perspective for organisation theory, which had until that time been preoccupied with “narrower US readings of Weber’s ideal-type theory of bureaucracy”.
Scott (1992) proposes that by the 1970’s researchers had turned towards a new emphasis in organisation theory, which was based on understanding organisational dynamics with a view to better managing them. This development (by definition) inferred a more normative intent in the research, and an emphasis on reductionist methodological approaches. Contingency theorists (Williamson, 1975) are generally thought to have refined the positivist approach, through their emphasis on normative patterns of ideal-fit between structure and context within organisational theory. It can also be argued that the research of configurationists such as Porter (1980) and Miles and Snow (1981) are further examples of this more prescribed approach towards organisation theory, based primarily around the concepts of industry characteristics and the resource base of the firm.

3.2.2 Reflexive Approaches to Organisational Research

The difficulty with normative research for organisation studies, as summarised by Clark (2000), is that it reinforces the practicality of existing paradigms, without sufficiently catering for opportunities for different approaches. Clark identifies specific weaknesses in using positivist research as the reliance on incremental and linear development of theory; an overemphasis on functionalism; a focus within the entity rather than without; a failure to adequately allow for the impact of context and autopoetic (self-reproducing and self-organising) processes; and a suppression of the relationship between innovation and efficiency.

Hatch (1997) proposes that organisation theory has a strong recent positivist heritage which is difficult to break. Lounsbury and Ventreska (2003) attribute this to a trend which commenced in the 1970’s, where research into organisations moved progressively away from university sociology departments, and into schools of management and business. In this regard, Stern and Barley (1996) argue that the relationship between organisations and broader social structures has become a neglected topic in organisation theory.

Notwithstanding this positivist trend, there does appear to be a resurgence of sorts in the past decade towards more structural and reflexive approaches. Practice theorists such as Mohr
(1998) are concentrating on the impact of cultural systems in shaping everyday events which take place in the social life of organizations. In this sense, practice theory has some parallels with the social-constructionist approaches founded in the 1960’s. Reuf (1999) refers to this trend as a turning of attention in research away from rational-functional towards social-ontological paradigms. Swartz (1997), in a different take on the resurgence of more structural approaches, points to an emerging interest in the notion of field, which Bordieu and Wasquant (1992: 107) explain permits an understanding of the way an individual’s “particular point of view of the world (and the field itself) is constructed”.

The literature review indicated that research over the past thirty years in areas relevant to the current research program has lacked a strongly reflexive dimension. Contemporary research in areas of organisational exchange has, for the most part, been based on laboratory-like experiments, where exchange relationships are simulated, for example in infinitely repeated multi-layer prisoner’s dilemma tests (Annen, 2003). As an indication of the inherent weakness in this approach, Walker et al. (2000) identify the need for caution in applying their experimental findings in network theory to real-life situations, where exchange is most often multi-plex, involves a diversity of actors, and has fewer rules for interaction.

3.2.3 Greater Practice Emphasis in Organisational Research

Using complexity theory as a focal point, Walker et al. (2000) propose the need for further practice-based research into the way actors in real-world situations construct exchange networks, which facilitate the process of self-organisation. They identify, in particular, an interest in exploring the role which network exchange plays when organisations interpret external perturbations in the environment, and translate these perturbations by way of an adaptive response. It can be argued that positivist research methodologies, based as they are on simulations, are unlikely to replicate the myriad of social exchanges which occur as real-life organisational actors make sense of multiple and complex environmental conditions.
Much of the post-1980’s research on leadership has been similarly positivist in nature, with an emphasis on predictors of leadership styles. The literature review suggests reductionist methods have enjoyed only limited success in reliably predicting leadership behaviour. Nevertheless, the emphasis in 1980’s and 1990’s research in leadership continues to be normative in nature. The focus on developing standardised measurement instruments for leadership style is evidence of this. An arguable weakness of measurement instruments, in this regard, is their inability to sufficiently cater for contextual and situational factors which influence leadership behaviour.

The literature review in Chapter 2 indicates that voluntarism is closely associated with systems and complexity theories of organisations and their environments. Burns and Stalker’s early research (1961) on open-systems was significant, in that it rejected the equilibrium view of strategy and the environment as proposed in determinist theory. Instead, Burns and Stalker emphasised “the relative capacity of the directors to interpret the external situation, and shape the personal commitments of managers to the central purpose of the firm” (Clark, 2000: 63).

In the open-systems model subsequently developed by Katz and Kahn (1966), which drew heavily on Burns and Stalker’s earlier work, the organisation is viewed as a network of relationships. Complexity theorists emphasise the capacity for organisations to identify new attractors in the environment which unbind established patterns and relationships within the organisational system, and stimulate the emergence of new organisational form. In research based on the organisation as a system of relationship-based networks, inductive rather than deductive approaches are more appropriate for understanding the way, in practice, that relationships and networks form, develop and un-form.

The extant literature suggested that research into the role played by top level teams in organisational adaptation should be reflexive in design. Reflexive design incorporates a capacity to interpret situational dynamics through reflecting on behaviour in an iterative way as it is observed, and flexibly focusing research activity on key relationships and phenomena as they emerge (Giddens, 1984). This approach facilitates a situation-specific understanding of the social processes being studied. Such an approach appeared to be appropriate for the
current program of research about how teams make decisions about changes in their environment, and the implications of this behaviour for broader organisational relationships.

In summary, a reflexive research design was chosen as the overarching paradigm for the current program of research, as it provided for an inductive approach to data collection and analysis, whereby understanding could be progressively constructed from an examination of real-life behaviour, within a natural setting. This approach was consistent with the model of top level team decision-making proposed by Edmondson et al. (2003), which emphasises that top level team effectiveness is highly situational, and specific to the team: situation relationship as it applies to each decision. Moreover, choosing a reflexive paradigm was consistent with the broader extant research, which pointed to a need for greater understanding of human exchange relationships under complex, real-life conditions.

### 3.3 REFLEXIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

In reflexive research design, Giddens (1984) attributes a fundamental role to cognition, use of language, and adoption of routines and habits in explaining the social life of organisations. The literature review undertaken for the current research program suggests that top level decision-making teams are settings in which the gambit of social relational factors is brought to bear. Reflexive research design typically employs inductive research methods, based on embedding the researcher within the social situation being studied. Reflexive design incorporates a subjectivist logic, whereby a high degree of emphasis is placed on inductive, rather than deductive reasoning in data collection and analysis. In view of the flexibility and responsiveness inherent in reflexive research design, this paradigm was considered to provide a superior framework for conducting the process of phenomenological enquiry in the current research study, compared to a more logical-positivist approach (Burrell & Morgan, 1980).

Logical-positivist research employs a deductive logic to the study of phenomena, whereby the extant theory represents the starting point from which to empirically test hypotheses about relationships between concepts (Neuman, 2003). Positivist research typically involves
analysis of quantitative data as the basis for deducing causal relationships. In choosing a reflexive research design for the current research program, due consideration was given to the limitations of positivist approaches in fully understanding the complexity of phenomena such as decision-making, organisational exchange and adaptation, as established by the literature review.

In positivist studies of groups, a typical research tool is the survey instrument, by which quantitative data are collected from research subjects. Positivist approaches rely substantially on self-rating and self-reporting by research subjects, who are bound up intrinsically in the machinations of the social group being studied (Mason, 2002). In these circumstances, member perspective may be influenced by exogenous factors such as dysfunction within the group itself (Hackman, 1990), or by inaccuracies associated with post-hoc reconstruction, and retrospective accounts of events (Mason, 2002). Options available for cross-referencing data are also limited in positivist studies of groups, especially data external to the group which can be used to confirm or disconfirm the group’s assessment of its characteristics and behaviours (Neuman, 2003).

3.3.1 Obtaining an Inside Perspective

The current research program sought to understand the interplay of factors at work in decision-making teams from an inside perspective (Mason, 2002), noting in particular the indication in the extant literature that group effectiveness is subject to situational variation (Edmondson et al., 2003). The current research program was concerned with the relationship which occurred between phenomena as the top level teams encountered a range of situations, and dealt with different decision issues. It was also important to understand these dynamics as they occurred over time, rather than at a point in time. As such, an interpretive rather than positivist research design (Neuman, 2003) was favoured, because of the reflexive capacity it offered. This approach allowed for adoption of an open-ended logic (Jorgensen, 1989), which could be shaped by direct observation of the social groups being studied, within their natural settings (Mason, 2002).
Qualitative research design is well established as being appropriate for a study which adopts an underlying interpretive and inductive methodology (Bryman, 2001). In qualitative studies, theory is regarded conceptually as an outcome of research activity, rather than a starting point, as in quantitative studies (Neuman, 2003).

Notwithstanding the arguments for an interpretive approach, the extant body of theory on decision-making effectiveness (Edmondson, et al., 2003) could not be ignored, and had to be taken into account in designing the research methods. The current research program, therefore, adopted a methodology whereby positivist data around the extant theory could be inducted within an underlying interpretive epistemological approach (Mason, 2002). The current program of study is therefore best described as mixed-method (Mason, 2002), within a qualitative research design framework. Mason (2002) indicates that it is not uncommon in observation-based research to use a range of other methods (including quantitative) to generate cross-referential data for triangulation purposes. This study applied an innovative methodology to a well researched area, and in the circumstances a grounded theory-like phenomenological method was relevant (Strauss, 1987).

Qualitative research methods have their roots in cultural anthropology studies (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Qualitative methods facilitate the understanding of social phenomena through immersion of the researcher within the situation being studied (Mason, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 1989), so that data can be gathered as behaviour is observed. Qualitative research methods assist in understanding the world of the research subject from the subject’s perspective (Bryman, 2001; Mason, 2002). Qualitative data are collected by the researcher directly, rather than through less animate mechanisms such as survey questionnaires.

Bryman identifies grounded theory as “the most widely used framework for analysing qualitative data” (2001: 390). Grounded theory relies on an inductive process of subject sampling and constant comparison over time, to develop theory about phenomena in an iterative way (Strauss, 1987). The current research program employed a story line technique as an important enabler of grounded theory development. Using this technique, the researcher established an evolving narrative, which described the relationships and phenomena which
emerged during the iterative data collection and analysis process. The story line, in effect, traced the journey of the researcher in a diary-like way, whereby the understanding of team processes and dynamics was constructed and understood at progressively higher levels of abstraction, as the program of study unfolded. The grounded theory methodology for the current research program - including the detailed story line development technique - is explained in Chapter 4, where the research methodology is outlined in detail.

3.4 RESEARCH SAMPLE

The current research study focused on natural group processes occurring within a normal field setting (Mason, 2002), and sought to understand the social world of the study groups from the point of view of participants (Mason, 2002). This dynamic inferred that a central component of the research sampling technique would be theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is a key technique in qualitative research, and provides the essential flexibility required for the researcher to progressively re-focus and adjust areas for exploration and attention, in the context of emerging relationships and phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Theoretical sampling is discussed in detail at Section 3.4.5.

More particularly, the study examined the actions of people over time in top level decision-making teams, as they dealt with specific management issues and made decisions arising from information about environmental change. The study design encompassed confidential interviews with participants to understand the history of group development; the context of the contributions made; the perspectives of individuals during group discussions; and the particular meaning (Jorgensen, 1989) attributed by members to group processes and outcomes.

The question of selecting subjects is important in any research study. In qualitative research, selection of subjects is by necessity influenced - and to an extent constrained - by the question of access and availability. Using quantitative research methods, participants can be accessed more remotely by the researcher through the use of questionnaires and survey instruments. However in qualitative research - which is based on developing an understanding of subjects
and phenomena in their natural setting - the researcher requires open and direct access to participants.

The question of access was, therefore, a key consideration in selecting the study sample, as were the specific study parameters. These issues are now discussed more fully in outlining the sampling strategy and methods.

### 3.4.1 Sampling Strategy

A focal point of this study was the machinations which occurred within top level teams as they went about the process of decision-making. For this reason, research activity was based on understanding this process from an insider perspective, which required the researcher to be embedded within natural team decision-making settings. Through a process of first hand observation of research subjects, the researcher sought to develop a story line for top level team functioning within the context of the research questions. A comprehensive process developed for triangulating observational data with interviews, contextual, and quantitative data is explained in Chapter 4.

In determining the sampling strategy, the substantive setting and context for the study were important considerations. As the focus was knowledge industries, for authenticity the broad sampling frame was identified as entities existing within the knowledge sector. The operational definition of knowledge industries was those whose key source of competitive advantage was vested in the knowledge/ expertise held by individual employees (Limerick et al., 2002).

### 3.4.2 Deciding the Sample Frame

In view of the contextual parameters prescribed by the research question, a relevant question was whether the sample frame should encompass entities within the same industry, or whether it should encompass multiple industry settings within the overarching knowledge sector. The
researcher elected to base the study in more than one organisation within the same industry. This strategy provided the opportunity to satisfy to a high degree the contextual prescriptions for the study. Choosing the same industry established a comparable set of external environmental parameters, and therefore a reliable basis for comparing group behaviours and outcomes.

More than one entity was chosen from within the selected industry. This provided an important degree of robustness to the program of study, by bringing into play different organisational setting characteristics. In shaping the sampling strategy, a final consideration was the need to focus on organisational areas which had comparable underlying organisational roles within the entities selected. This approach allowed for valid cross-group comparisons, as it permitted an analysis of how teams with similar organisational roles responded to decisions arising from comparable external environmental influences.

In summary, deciding the sample frame involved ensuring that the sample met the contextual prescriptions for the study, namely that the study groups were from knowledge industries, were from different organisations, and had comparable organisational roles and environmental conditions. This approach provided a reliable basis for drawing comparisons between study groups, and developing grounded theory.

Within the conceptual parameters discussed, the detailed techniques for framing the sample and selecting actual research units is outlined in Section 3.4.4. However, prior to discussing the sampling techniques, the matter of logistical limiting and delimiting considerations is canvassed. This discussion serves to place the sample frame strategy within a broader research authenticity context.

### 3.4.3 Logistics - Limiting and Delimiting Considerations

The broad sampling strategy outlined represented an appropriate balance of logistical limiting and delimiting factors (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Limiting factors were associated with the
study being grounded within a single industry setting, which limited the potential for generalisability across the knowledge sector broadly. A single industry setting also inferred a single set of environmental conditions, and while this had advantages, did limit the polarity of data sourcing (Pettigrew, 1990). Notwithstanding this degree of limitation, the approach did permit the study to identify a finite set of conditions in which the categories which emerged in the study existed. This facility was considered to be an overriding factor in setting the research frame, because it permitted an understand of the relationships between the two phenomena of interest, namely top level team decision-making behaviour, and exchange relationships between organisational units. In the circumstances, carriage of such a study across multiple industry settings in the context described was considered to be unwieldy from a logistical perspective.

Notwithstanding the broad logistical limitations outlined, the sampling approach did establish substantial logistical delimitations. These delimitations were associated with the researcher being able to make comparisons of organisational areas which had similar underlying roles, but were located within different entities, which in turn faced comparable environmental challenges. The study frame parameters were considered to provide the basis for the findings to be potentially generalisable to a high degree within this industry, notwithstanding the limitations of findings for the knowledge sector more broadly. The sampling strategy also allowed the study to minimise differences between data, because the study groups had comparable organisational roles and environmental challenges. At the same time, differences across data could be maximized because of the different underlying organisational setting characteristics which applied to the study groups.

The strategy outlined - and the balance of limiting and delimiting factors - was considered to meet Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) requirements for effective and reliable generation of theoretical properties within categories, and was therefore a sound basis for development of grounded theory, albeit within a substantive setting.

As identified in the introductory comments about study sample, researcher access was a significant practical issue in selecting sample units as study subjects. The researcher was able
to gain direct access to two organizations which were part of the same industry within the knowledge sector. The organisational gatekeepers were known to the researcher, and granted unrestricted access to the study subjects. This represented a substantial opportunity to limit access problems, which is seen by Bryman (1988) as a key challenge in qualitative research. In the circumstances outlined, the study sample was therefore drawn from two entities for which access was available to the researcher.

Within the broad sampling strategy outlined, specific sampling techniques are now explained.

3.4.4 Sampling Techniques

The sampling techniques comprised four components.

Firstly, in choosing the broad sampling fame, a purposive sampling technique was used (Zikmund, 1997). This approach was consistent with the parameters and substantive setting for the study, which required a deliberate and selective approach (Zikmund, 1997) to choosing the research units. In effect, the study parameters determined the basis for choosing the research units in quite a prescriptive way.

The sample units chosen were four top level decision-making teams, two from each of two universities which were accessible to the researcher. These teams had similar responsibilities in areas of university administration.

Choosing four top level teams represented approximately a 25% sample of all such teams within the two institutions involved in the study. Moreover, when considered across all entities of comparable size and complexity within this sector in Australia, the choice of four teams represented approximately a 5% sample of all such top level teams with comparable responsibilities, in similarly sized Australian universities. The four teams chosen were from administrative divisions with comparable underlying organisational roles, and facing similar
environmental settings. These were important prescriptions arising from the research questions.

The strategy outlined for selecting the initial broad sample of study units provided a reliable level of representativeness of the potential “population” of these units, within the parameters set for the study.

The second element of the sampling technique related to participants within the study units themselves. Again, a purposive sampling approach was taken, namely that all members within the study teams were chosen as participants. This approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand the dynamics of team interactions, which by definition inferred that all team members should be part of the study (with their consent).

3.4.4.1 Demographics of Study Teams

Tables 3.1 to 3.3 provide a comparative summary of key demographic data in relation to the four study teams chosen through the sampling technique. Demographic data provided in the tables comprises experience levels, gender composition, and job role diversity respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.1</th>
<th>Experience Levels in Current Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leader more than 5 years in current role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data at Table 3.1 indicates a similar experience profile between the teams in terms of the length of time team members had been in their current job roles.
TABLE 3.2
Gender Composition Within Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male Leader</th>
<th>Female Leader</th>
<th>Male Members</th>
<th>Female Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data at Table 3.2 indicates that two of the teams were male dominated, with male team leaders, while two of the teams were female dominated, with one male and one female leader.

TABLE 3.3
Job Roles Within Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Functional Responsibilities of Team Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Team 1       | Provision of underlying infrastructure architecture  
|              | Provision of underlying infrastructure applications  
|              | Provision of communications capability (2 members)  
|              | Provision of infrastructure support service  
|              | Provision of project management services  
|              | Provision of specialist infrastructure for research  
|              | Provision of client support services  
|              | Provision of quality control services  
| Team 2       | Provision of professional training services  
|              | Provision of audio visual support services  
|              | Provision of information desk services  
|              | Provision of library services  
|              | Provision of printing and copying  
|              | Provision of disabled services  
|              | Provision of services for particular client groups  
| Team 3       | Provision of campus based services (3 members)  
|              | Provision of specialist discipline based services  
|              | Acquisition and management of specialist infrastructure  
|              | Management of specialist infrastructure & services  
|              | Management of service quality and staff development  
|              | Provision of underlying infrastructure  
| Team 4       | Provision of underlying infrastructure architecture  
|              | Provision of underlying infrastructure applications  
|              | Provision of communications capability  
|              | Provision of infrastructure support services  
|              | Provision of specialist infrastructure for research  

*Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.*
The data at Table 3.3 indicate that there were different types of job roles within all of the teams. However, in three of the teams the majority of roles are associated with providing a particular type of specialist infrastructure, notwithstanding that team members had responsibility for different aspects of that service. In Team 1 and 4 it was computing related services, in Team 3 it was library related infrastructure. In Team 3 however, team members had responsibility for providing services, and the type of service provided by each team member was substantially different (i.e. library, printing, staff training, computing support, disabled services, telephone services). The extent of job role diversity was concluded to be greater in Team 3 than the other teams in view of the significantly greater breadth of responsibilities incorporated within the job roles.

The organisational gatekeepers and the teams themselves agreed that any staff members substituting for study group members would also be included (with their consent). Within the circumstances described, this purposive approach was appropriate for selecting participants within the sampling units.

Because the program of study focused on team decision-making, the third element of the sampling technique related to choosing the decisions to be examined for each team within the study. For each team, the first ten decisions considered by the team during the period of observation were chosen. Because consecutive meetings of teams were attended and examined, this approach allowed for effective analysis of decisions which required more than one meeting to resolve.

The fourth and final element of the sampling technique related more specifically to the grounded theory methodology, and is now discussed.
3.4.5 Key Informants and Theoretical Sampling

On establishing the broad sample frame parameters within which the research study would be conducted, theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was the central and critical technique for determining the focus of the research at any given time, once the processes of participant observation commenced.

Within the qualitative research design for the study, members of the study teams played the role of key informants (Bryman, 1988), who were able to provide immediate and accurate inside information around the phenomena being studied. Across the four study teams, some 35 members played this role. The number and diversity of key informants was considered to provide an effective safeguard against the researcher’s perspective being unduly influenced by having only a small cadre of research subjects, who may have had similar perspectives on issues (Bryman, 1988).

The fourth and final component of the sampling method, therefore, related to the iterative nature of the study design. Throughout the course of the study program as it unfolded, a theoretical sampling method was applied, whereby the researcher selectively focused on participants who were central to the key relationships and phenomena which were emerging from the data. This approach was consistent with Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) prescription that in data collection to generate grounded theory, the researcher decides which data to collect, and from where/whom at each stage, depending on the directions the research findings are taking. Theoretical sampling in this way permitted the saturation of emergent categories with data (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), a key process in developing conclusions about relationships during grounded theory development.

While potentially subjective in nature, there is considerable justification in the extant research for using a theoretical sampling method as the research unfolded. Fettersman (1989) emphasises the role of researcher judgment in progressively refining the focus of qualitative research studies. Strauss and Corbin (1990) also identify the need for the researcher to focus on concepts of theoretical relevance as they emerge.
In practice, the areas and subjects for more intensive theoretical sampling emerged as being those which played key roles in the emergent phenomena. For example, an observed situation of unresolved dissent within a study group provided the basis for closer theoretical sampling which focused on the particular dissenting members, and the leader. This, in turn, gave way to closer examination of leader behaviour, as the broader impact of dissent management within this team became clearer. Researcher judgment was also central to developing inferences about theory, based on theoretical samples taken at progressively higher levels of abstraction.

The researcher position in relation to participants in the study was that of a detached outsider (Neuman, 2003). This approach was considered appropriate because it was not possible to construct a natural and logical role for the researcher as a contributing member of the groups being studied.

In conclusion, the approach to sampling emphasises purposive techniques. It is not uncommon for such techniques to be associated with qualitative research, and while appropriate and justifiable in their own right, raised important questions about ensuring research quality. The question of research quality is now addressed.

3.5 RESEARCH QUALITY

The assurance of quality in grounded theory-based research is important because of the potential for subjectivity on the part of the researcher, who is embedded within the social processes being studied. Bryman (2001) identifies the Guba and Lincoln (1994) framework of trustworthiness and authenticity as appropriate for ensuring design quality in this type of research. Central to this framework is the likening of validity and reliability (central issues in quantitative research) to the concepts of trustworthiness and authenticity respectively. The following approach was developed for ensuring research quality using the Guba and Lincoln (1994) framework.

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.
3.5.1 Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1994) define trustworthiness in qualitative research as having four dimensions, namely credibility; transferability; dependability and confirmability. The provisions made for the current research program in these four areas are now discussed.

3.5.1.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research concerns the acceptability of the findings to others (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Progressive triangulation of data (Herman & Egri, 2002) was the key vehicle for ensuring credibility of findings. The approach to triangulation is explained in detail in Chapter 4, which sets out the research methodology in detail. Triangulation was an important activity in the current research program for developing reliable tentative conclusions about emerging behavioural characteristics for the study groups. Extensive use of cross-referential data provided the researcher with well grounded prima-facie findings, for which further validation was able to be drawn from subsequent iterations of team observations and member interviews.

Member validation of the research findings was undertaken in a progressive and unobtrusive way throughout the study, by the use of open-ended interview questions wherever possible. This assisted to confirm tentative patterns and relationships emerging in the data. The sensitivity around this process was to ensure this was done in a way which did not breach trust, or influence participant behaviour during subsequent observations. Confidentiality of data is discussed at Section 3.6.

In the latter stages of the study, emergent theoretical propositions about group behaviour were tested and validated with each group. This helped ensure theoretical propositions were truly representative of the social world of each group, as perceived by its members (Mason, 2002).
3.5.1.2 Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research concerns the question of wider applicability of research findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). While not a primary consideration in qualitative research because of its highly contextual nature (Neumann, 2003), it was nevertheless important to provide a basis for third parties to determine whether the findings had application in other situations. To facilitate this, the study findings were supported by rich and detailed accounts (Geertz, 1973) of data arising from team observation, triangulation and theory-building processes (subject to confidentiality provisions). This aspect is discussed further in Chapter 4.

3.5.1.3 Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is concerned with the question of merit (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The research methodology was set out and described in detail in the original research proposal. The methodology is captured in Chapter 4 to allow research procedures to be understood and replicated in detail. Recording of the research methodology in this way permitted an effective process of peer audit (Mason, 2002) at key stages of the research, and will facilitate subsequent reflections on the research study methodology. It was in the interest of establishing an early reference point for dependability that research activity streams were outlined in detail in the research proposal. In this way, the study design was made explicit from the outset, in the interest of independent scrutiny and critique.

3.5.1.4 Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research is concerned with the assurance of objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher made a clear statement in the research proposal about their personal perspectives in relation to the phenomena being studied, as well as specific background experiences which have influenced their perspective. These are reproduced in Chapter 1. Through discussions with the research supervisor and personal mentors, the researcher was able to address the influence of any unconscious pre-conceptions during the research process.
During the data analysis process, the researcher sought to control for the effect of negative evidence (Neuman, 2003). Factors which may have consciously or unconsciously been denied or misrepresented by members in the study groups were explored comprehensively and sensitively through the medium of confidential interviews, and the outcomes noted. The timing and process for this was central to the integrity of the data analysis.

3.5.2 Authenticity

Guba and Lincoln (1994) propose five dimensions for establishing authenticity in qualitative research, namely: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity. The provisions made for the current research program in these five areas are now discussed.

3.5.2.1 Fairness

Fairness in qualitative research is associated with the representation of all viewpoints (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher made explicit any member viewpoints which contradicted or challenged patterns and conclusions which were emerging. An important part of the research discipline was to place and explain contra viewpoints in context. Where this could not be done, contra viewpoints were reported explicitly as exceptions in the data.

3.5.2.2 Ontological Authenticity

Ontological authenticity in qualitative research is concerned with ensuring research findings authentically reflect the research subjects’ understanding of their social world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The process of member validation to establish research credibility was based on testing theoretical propositions about each group’s behaviour with the group itself. This process was conducted in the latter stages of the research, where the researcher relationship with the groups allowed this question to be broached in a non-threatening way. This process
was also an important part of establishing closure with each group, and for structured de-briefing by the researcher.

This process - managed sensitively - provided member validation for the emergent theory, as well as a better understanding on the part of group members of their decision-making processes and effectiveness. Overall acceptance by members of the findings was important for establishing ontological authenticity, and for achieving mutually rewarding outcomes from the research study.

3.5.2.3 Educative Authenticity

Educative authenticity in qualitative research is associated with understanding the perspectives of others (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The debriefing process for the groups comprised provision of information about processes and perspectives from other groups in the study (in a general and anonymous way). This information was presented by way of alternative approaches to dealing with similar challenges, rather than as an evaluative or prescriptive comparison. This input was designed to assist the groups to reflect on other possible approaches to decision-making and relationship-building activities.

3.5.2.4 Catalytic Authenticity

Catalytic authenticity in qualitative research concerns the extent to which the research stimulates behavioural change (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The research did not set out to achieve behavioural change in the groups being studied. However, through the theory validation and team debriefing processes, the groups were provided with potentially valuable insight about their response to their social world, as well as information about how similar groups responded to a comparable social world. The extent to which this leads to behaviour change in the study groups is likely to be influenced by factors about the groups themselves. Nevertheless, the research findings permitted this issue to be explored more fully with individual groups which were interested in reviewing their processes more deeply.
3.5.2.5 Tactical Authenticity

Tactical authenticity in qualitative research concerns the extent to which the research empowers change (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The extent to which change will be an outcome from the research is likely to vary group by group. However, the strategies outlined under the foregoing authenticity criteria do provide stimulus and direction for behavioural change in the context of continuous improvement.

In summary, researcher actions taken during the data collection and analysis processes provided a strong basis for ensuring research trustworthiness and authenticity subject to the research limitations described in Section 3.3.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

While the subject areas of this research study were not socially sensitive, a central ethical consideration was to obtain clearances from the organisational gatekeepers prior to the study commencing, and to ensure the anonymity of the research organisations, and the research subjects during the study (Neuman, 2003). A copy of the access permissions and clearances obtained from the organisational gatekeepers is at Appendix A.

Diener and Crandall (1978; cited in Bryman, 2001) posit five key ethical questions to be addressed in qualitative research. The following is an outline of procedures that were followed in this study to address these five ethical considerations.

3.6.1 Harm to Participants

The central issue from a harm point of view was that of harm to reputation, development and self esteem, if the study findings identified specific groups or individuals (Mason, 2002). To safeguard against this, group and member confidentiality was ensured through a process of
keeping records confidential and secure; by not naming groups or individuals in data or in the research findings; and by not presenting information in a way that it could be attributed to groups or individuals. Consistent with this approach, the information on team demographics presented in this report has been couched in broad and summary terms, in the interest of keeping the identity of the study groups confidential.

3.6.2 Informed Consent

The group and member observation in the study were conducted on an overt basis. It was agreed with the organisational gatekeepers that groups in the study would be involved at their own consent, after the researcher provided a briefing for participants about the broad areas for the study; the practical aspects of the observation and interview processes; and the proposal for collection and presentation of data. A copy of the informed consent forms completed by participants is at Appendix B.

3.6.3 Invasion of Privacy

While individual written consent was obtained from each research subject before involving them in the study, as a further safeguard against invasion of privacy, the researcher made it clear in writing that individual members could elect to withdraw themselves and any data relating to them from the study at any time, without explanation. Subjects were also advised there was no requirement to answer questions which they felt were intrusive, or made them feel uncomfortable in any way.

3.6.4 Deception

It was not appropriate for the researcher to provide a copy of the detailed research proposal to members, or to specify in exact terms the phenomena being studied in the research, lest this
influence group behaviour during the observation process. The researcher presented the study as being about “researching the process of team decision-making in turbulent environments”.

More generally, the researcher adhered to the provisions of the Social Research Association (SRA) Ethical Guidelines (http://www.the-sra.org.uk/ethics.htm), as well as the ethical guidelines for research of the university sponsoring the study. A copy of the ethical clearance obtained from the sponsoring university is at Appendix C.

### 3.7 RESEARCH DESIGN - SUMMARY

The current research program applied an underlying interpretive research design. An interpretive design was chosen firstly because of the inherent limitations of positivist paradigms identified by the extant literature, and secondly because of the particular relevance of a reflexive research capacity for the phenomena being studied. Notwithstanding the interpretive intent in the research design, the wide body of extant research in the subject areas could not be ignored, and a limited range of relevant data around specific areas of the extant research has been incorporated, using quantitative data collection methods. For this reason, the research is best described as mixed-method, within a predominant interpretive design.

A purposive research sample was taken, as this approach was consistent with the research questions, within the contextual prescriptions for the research. Within the purposively derived sample, theoretical sampling was chosen as the method for progressively refining the focus of the research around key phenomena as they emerged within the data analysis process.

A comprehensive research quality framework was established to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity, which are central principles for qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Because the research involved human participants within their natural settings, comprehensive measures were taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality. The specific research methods underpinning the research design are now outlined in detail.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As established in the discussion about research design in Chapter 3, the current research program is mixed-method, within an underlying qualitative data analysis framework. This chapter explains the research methodology in detail, including the arrangements for integration of qualitative and quantitative data.

The chapter commences with an outline of first principles, including the broad arrangements for organising the research. Data collection and analysis techniques are then explored in detail. This chapter also explains the grounded theory methodology for the study, in the context of techniques for data collection and analysis. The story line aspect of the research methodology was discussed conceptually in Chapter 3, and was central to grounded theory development.

4.1 FIRST PRINCIPLES

Qualitative research design requires a methodological approach which is iterative in nature. This allows the researcher to draw from an on-going process of observation, analysis, and re-observation to establish patterns emerging in the data, from which theory is able to be inferred about relationships between phenomena (Strauss, 1987).

Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) measures for ensuring trustworthiness and authenticity in qualitative research are outlined in Chapter 3. Guba and Lincoln identify the process of data triangulation as important in qualitative research design, especially when the methodology is based on member observations. Both Guba and Lincoln (1994), and Mason (2002) point to triangulation as an important counter for the potentially distorting influence of researcher perspective and selectivity during the process of participant observation.
Triangulation is a process derived from quantitative research for establishing multiple measures of concepts (Webb et al., 1981). In qualitative research, triangulation ensures credibility of findings through a process of cross-checking with other sources, which may include quantitative data (Herman & Egri, 2002).

To optimise the study’s authenticity, observations of study groups took place over a period of 12-18 months, and the research methods comprised substantial triangulation of data from multiple sources over this period. The first principle of accessing cross-referential data was a key factor in the strategy for organising the research activity.

The broad arrangements for organising the research are now explained.

## 4.2 ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH

The logistical issues inherent in research conducted over twelve to eighteen months, and involving multiple data sources, suggested the way the research was organised would be important.

In this regard, the challenge for the researcher was to develop an underlying framework for the overall research activity which provided structure over the period of the study, without limiting flexibility and spontaneity of approach (Jorgensen, 1989). For this reason, the research activity was organised into a series of concurrent and inter-locking studies, an approach which was considered to provide a good balance of cohesion with flexibility.

The chart at Figure 4.1 depicts the sequencing of activity streams which occurred over the period of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1</th>
<th>Study 2</th>
<th>Study 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Months 1-3</td>
<td>Months 4-6</td>
<td>Months 7-9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.1 Sequencing of Research Studies**

*Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.*
The central stream for research activity during the study period was Study 2, where data from team observations and member interviews were progressively developed and analysed, then triangulated more widely with data arising from Studies 1 and 3.

The following is an outline of the research activities undertaken within each of the three studies, and depicts the conceptual linkages between the studies. The specific methods for data collection and analysis for each study are addressed at Section 4.3.

4.2.1 Study (Qualitative Data) - Contextual Reference Point

Study 1 comprised activity by the researcher to establish the context for each of the study groups within its organisational setting. In this study, the researcher developed comparative data about the terms of reference, and responsibility/authority/accountability parameters for each top level team, as well as demographic data about individual team member. The researcher also conducted discussions with the gatekeepers (chief officer) in each organisation, to establish reference points about how long each team has been together, stability of team membership, the team’s organisational context and major challenges, as well as other salient information.

The resultant profile developed for each team provided a reference point for team observations and data analysis, and assisted to contextualize differences noted between the teams on a range of indicators. The profiles were monitored for team membership changes, and the gatekeepers were re-interviewed over the course of the study to identify and assess any change in organisational context.

Anchoring the team profiles in this way provided an important source of triangulating data, and also gave due recognition to the fact that team demographics and context were unlikely to be static during the study, as it reached across an 18 month time horizon. This study essentially comprised a contextual comparison over time of demographic data about three top level teams from comparable organisational jurisdictions, with comparable roles and responsibilities in decision-making.
4.2.2 Stream 2 (Qualitative Data) – Observations & Interviews

The central core of the current program of research was represented in Study 2. A key component in the development of grounded theory was the process of observing the study groups over an extended period, within their natural field settings (Mason, 2002). This activity was represented at Study 2. In particular, Study 2 encapsulated the iterative process of observation, analysis and re-observation, which was the primary tool for data collection and analysis. The data gathered at Study 2 informed the progressive story line which was developed around the phenomena being studied. Study 2 also provided the setting for triangulation of data from other activity streams.

The researcher attended all meetings for each of the four decision-making teams over a 6-12 month period, observing the interplay of factors involved as the teams considered new information from the environment, and made decisions about this information.

Mason (2002) identifies the importance in observational studies to having an initial set of broad factors on which to base early readings of study group activity. He recommends this approach because it *inter alia* provides a commencing framework for organising data, while allowing for other data to emerge. Based on Mason’s prescription, initial observations were made against an indicative set of indicators from the extant research on team effectiveness by Edmondson et al. (2003). These indicators provided a good starting point for observations, while allowing the freedom for other situational factors/phenomena to emerge for further examination and reflection. This approach also provided an immediate basis for ensuring research cohesion during the initial stages of the study.

The researcher routinely interviewed team members - including the team leader - prior to and following meetings, to develop a more complete understanding of the circumstances and context of team processes and decisions, from the perspective of participants. Open-ended questions were used to capture in as much detail as possible the reactions and insights of team members in their own words (Neuman, 2003).
Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour

Data which arose from the observations and interviews formed the core of the research story line, and were collected continuously over the length of the study. Data which arose from other activity streams were systematically juxtaposed with the data from Stream 2 to complete the contextual picture, and to further validate tentative findings as they emerged. This technique provided a strong platform for triangulation of the data to identify and confirm patterns and relationships. Such patterns and relationships were, in turn, progressively re-evaluated in an iterative way to build up the progressive story line for how the groups functioned.

Similarities and differences in patterns of group behaviour - as indicated in the data - were reflected in the story line, and correlation analysis assisted to confirm important relationships between concepts within a grounded theory context (Strauss, 1987). The process for identifying important relationships between phenomena is explained in Section 4 of this chapter.

4.2.3 Stream 3 (Quantitative Data) – Leadership Style Inventory

There was a strong indication in the extant research which suggested leadership style was an important factor in determining top level team behaviour (Bass, 2002). The qualitative research activities undertaken in Study 2 allowed for leader actions to be observed, and for their consequences to be explored more deeply through confidential interviews. However, in view of its potential level of importance, it was determined that leadership style in the current program of research should be explored using multiple data sources.

To this end, Study 3 involved the administration of a confidential survey instrument about leadership style. A recognised measurement instrument which measures factors for transformational and transactional leadership (Podsakoff et al., 1984; Podsakoff et al., 1990) was used to identify leadership styles, and make comparisons between the four team leaders. The instrument chosen measures leadership style as identified by followers (in this case other team members). The researcher also asked the team leader to self-assess their own style using
the instrument, for comparison purposes. A copy of the leadership style survey instrument is at Appendix D.

The results from the leadership style inventory provided the basis for triangulating qualitative data obtained from observations and interviews about the leader’s influence within the teams. It also provided a basis for comparing the leader’s preferred style (their own survey response), and their style-in-use (responses from other team members). This dual perspective inter alia allowed the researcher to reflect on the influence of broader organisational setting factors on team leader behaviour, within the decision-making team setting.

In research quality terms, the insights from the survey instruments provided important cross-referential data for the qualitative information about team and team leader characteristics which emerged from observations and member interviews.

### 4.2.4 Relevance of Studies for the Research Questions

The research problem related to making an original contribution to methodology and theory in relation to the impact of top level team decision-making behaviour on exchange relationships between organisational units. From a methodological point of view, the three studies were designed to illustrate how an innovative methodology such as grounded theory could be used to integrate situation specific data of actual team behaviour as it was observed (Study 2), with more aggregated data about team context (Study 1), and team leader attributes (Study 3), which was assessed over a longer period. The three studies together formed a basis for developing a robust grounded theory, by providing comprehensive triangulating data for testing emerging patterns and relationships.

The method outlined for organising the study into overlapping concurrent studies provided clarity conceptually about qualitative and quantitative data gathering activities, and their relationship (Mason, 2002). Because of the complexity of the phenomena involved, the data collection and analysis framework provided an appropriate vehicle for undertaking concurrent
studies which were complete in themselves, and at their point of confluence provided the basis for important cross-referential validation and theory building. The detailed data collection and analysis procedures for each study are now discussed.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

In any research study, collection of data is undertaken as the basis for inferring acceptable knowledge through analysis (Bryman, 2001). Because the notion of acceptable knowledge in quantitative research is highly situational (Jorgensen, 1989), data collection in qualitative research centres on capturing the type of data which gives insight about social context, and a member-centred “insider’s viewpoint” (Jorgensen, 1989: 14) of what the data mean. For this reason, qualitative data often comprise words, nuances, non verbal signals, as well as that which is not spoken by members within the social situation being studied (Neuman, 2003).

By definition, these data are most effectively collected through direct observation of participants within a natural setting, where phenomena are revealed through the process of human interaction (Mason, 2002). As indicated in Section 4.3, Stream 2 was the central stream of the research, and involved embedding the researcher within the study groups over a six to twelve month period, to observe member interactions within authentic decision-making situations.

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis processes occur in tandem, rather than sequentially, as in quantitative research (Neuman, 2003). Concurrent data collection and analysis allows for areas of focus and/or bricolage (tools) to be adjusted and refined in the context of emerging patterns and relationships (Neuman, 2003). For this reason, the approach to data collection is explained broadly in this section, but is also incorporated in greater detail in the subsequent section on data analysis procedures. In this way, specific tools such as analytical memos are explained on the one hand, and also placed in the context of their role in data analysis on the other.
As outlined in Chapter 3, the study provided for triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data in a tandem way - hence the mixed-method approach. Study 1 and 2 data were qualitative, based on observations and interviews; whereas Study 3 data were quantitative, and based on administration of survey questionnaires to members of the study teams. The following is an outline of the broad data collection arrangements within each activity stream.

4.3.1 Study 1 (Qualitative Data) - Contextual Reference Point

Team profile data were collected through interviews with the gatekeepers at the commencement of the study, and at regular intervals thereafter. These data focused on:

- the role of the teams
- how long members had been together in the teams
- team membership stability
- roles and responsibilities of team members in their day to day jobs
- the teams’ reporting hierarchies
- the teams’ lateral (cross boundary) relationships
- the responsibility areas of teams, and relevant challenges
- other salient factors

Data collected within this stream were organised and managed through a flexible MS Office application (MS Access). This application also facilitated comparison and cross-referencing of important contextual indicators within the data about team demographics and context.
4.3.2 Study 2 (Qualitative Data) - Observation & Interviews

Qualitative data were collected through the researcher attending regular scheduled meetings of the teams being studied.

The researcher observed and noted the interpersonal processes which took place during team discussions and decision-making. Early focus was on understanding the rhythms of each team, their language and pseudonyms (Neuman, 2003), as well as observing the dynamics at work when teams went about the process of decision-making.

As a commencing framework, the researcher based initial team observations around factors in the extant literature about team effectiveness (Edmondson et al., 2003), namely:

- whether team members had information available to them, and how this occurred
- whether members appeared to have a similar view about issues, or were approaching issues from different perspectives
- whether the team leader encouraged divergence of view, and how this was managed in the group
- whether team members were comfortable about disagreeing and putting an alternative view, and how the leader and other members reacted to this

While this framework provided an initial lens for observations, the researcher made comprehensive notes about the full range of observed group processes and interactions. This disciplined approach provided the basis for identifying the emergence of other patterns and relationships.

Confidential interviews were conducted with group members after (and to a lesser extent prior to) meetings, to obtain a range of perspectives on the discussion and interactions which had taken place during meetings.
The researcher recorded all team discussions and team member interviews using an audio recorder. Transcripts were developed verbatim from the audio recordings, and cleared with the research subjects for authenticity. The researcher maintained documentary research records in the following five-part format (Neuman, 2003):

1. Jotted notes - taken during observations
2. Observation notes – recording/ recollection of interactions
3. Inferential notes - researcher interpretation of interactions & dynamics
4. Analytical notes/ memos – the progressive story line narrative, including findings from iterative observations, and reflections about key phenomena
5. Personal notes - researcher’s personal intuitive feelings about issues

Notes taken at points 3, 4 and 5 were progressively annotated as appropriate to reflect new information and perspectives which arose from follow-up interviews, and subsequent iterations of group observations and analysis.

The progressive development of the story line for the research was brought together from the analytical memos into a single narrative, which reflected the progressive building of insight around the research questions. This documentary record of the study (comprising some 30,000 words) was invaluable for the researcher, as it took on a historical diary-like quality. Using the story line building technique, the researcher was able to bring together in one place the insights which arose from multiple data sources about how the teams functioned under similar, as well as different conditions. The story line narrative represented a reflective record of tentative conclusions about relationships and patterns, which, in turn, were confirmed or reviewed in the light of further iterations of observation and analysis.

As the study unfolded, conclusions about relationships and phenomena which arose in the story line were able to be made at an increasing level of abstraction. The story line document was progressively foot-noted with references to the associated statistical analysis procedures which supported the research findings.
4.3.3 Study 3 (Quantitative Data) – Leadership Style Inventory

To more fully understand the influence of team leader style and attitudes on the way the study teams functioned, quantitative data around the extant theory in this area was collected by survey instrument. The Podsakoff et al. (1990) and Podsakoff et al. (1984) leadership inventories were applied in the form of a single survey instrument, to measure follower perceptions of transformational and transactional leadership behaviours.

These data, when triangulated with data from team observations and member interviews, provided important additional insight into the team leader’s attitude to issues such as engaging team members intellectually through the decision-making process, and how the leader managed and used their personal and organisational sources of power.

Examples of attributes measured in the leadership style survey instrument included:

- establishing a vision for the group
- modelling appropriate team behaviours
- fostering collaboration
- establishing shared goals
- recognising personal needs of members
- having consideration for feelings of members
- challenging members to think about old problems in new ways
- goal setting, and associated reward (and punishment) behaviours

Team leaders also self-assessed their leadership style. The leaders’ assessment was able to be compared to their followers’ assessment, and, when triangulated with data from team observations and member interviews, provided insight about the leader’s style-in-use, compared to their professed or preferred styles. Differences between follower and leader
ratings were cross-referenced with contextual data about teams. In this way, qualitative inferences were able to be drawn about relationships which had significance for grounded theory development.

Using the framework outlined as the basis for data collection, a comprehensive set of data analysis procedures was established. These are now discussed.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Section 4.3 outlines the broad approach to data collection for the study.

In qualitative research, data analysis is an iterative process which occurs as data are gathered, using an open-ended logic (Kaplan, 1964). A concurrent approach to data collection and analysis allows for areas of focus and/ or bricolage (tools) to be adjusted and refined in the context of emerging patterns and relationships (Neuman, 2003). The description of data analysis arrangements for the study which follows incorporates further precise detail about data collection procedures, in view of the close link between the two.

Data analysis procedures were structured to facilitate the development of grounded theory. For this reason, the description of data analysis procedures commences with a further discussion of the specific grounded theory technique, as it relates to the current research program.

4.4.1 Grounded Theory Development

The concept of grounded theory and its place and importance in qualitative research design are discussed in detail in Chapter 3, which deals with the research strategy. The more precise application of grounded theory procedures is canvassed at this point, as it is central to understanding the data analysis procedures within context. Data analysis procedures are then
discussed in terms of their contribution at various stages to the development of grounded theory.

As indicated in Chapter 3, the current research program used a grounded theory method for understanding phenomena and their relationships. The grounded theory methodology was at the heart of the data analysis procedures. In this context, the central purpose of data analysis was to develop a story line about the way top level team decision-making occurred, based on progressive iterations of observation, analysis and re-observation. In this way, observed behaviour of team members was able to be triangulated with individual interviews, as well as contextual and quantitative data, to develop a picture of the behavioural patterns which presented for each team.

Using grounded theory technique, initial behavioural insights were established through successive iterations of observation and analysis. This iterative approach progressively established confidence about the trustworthiness and authenticity of behavioural patterns which were emerging within the data analysis process. Over a longer period of observation and analysis, conclusions were able to be drawn at an increasing level of abstraction about phenomena and their relationships. At the highest level of abstraction, these conclusions informed the grounded theory which emerged from the current research program.

In developing grounded theory within the framework described, data were progressively sampled, then coded and compared to infer the presence of concepts, as well as relationships between concepts. This process formed the basis for qualitative hypothesis and theory building (Mason, 2002). Tentative findings were re-tested as the basis for refining and confirming particular behavioural patterns which were deeply grounded within the social situations being studied (Neuman, 2003).

Qualitative data analysis procedures comprised a combination of successive approximation technique (Applebaum, 1978) for researching within-group phenomena; combined with analytic comparison technique, in particular method of agreement and method of difference (Ragin, 1987), for researching phenomena across-groups, and for macro level theory
development. Because of the iterative nature of data analysis within the grounded theory methodology, the two techniques were in practice applied in tandem, and this process is now outlined in detail. The description of data analysis procedures incorporates more finely grained detail about researcher techniques, procedures and tools/bricolage.

By way of general introduction, data analysis techniques used in the study reflected the principle of drawing from descriptive and analytical data to infer qualitative relationships at increasing levels of abstraction. Of these, the relationships which presented as qualitatively important were confirmed through correlation analysis, and provided the basis for grounded theory development. The study employed an innovative patterning technique for converting qualitative data into a form which could be analysed to identify correlations. This technique is discussed in Section 4.5.3.

4.4.2 Within-Group Data Analysis

Successive approximation technique was used for analysis of data within groups. Successive approximation technique is best known through the work of Applebaum (1978). This technique for within-group research involves the progressive build-up and refinement of data over the period of a research study.

In successive approximation technique, Mason (2002: 69) proposes a three phase process for taking “readings” of the situations being observed. These phases are described as literal; interpretive; and reflexive. To facilitate the process of data readings, the data are progressively coded using a disciplined and systematic approach. Neuman (2003) refers to the importance in qualitative research of coding data as they are developed. Coding refers to a process whereby raw data are categorized, in order to identify themes and concepts present in the situations being studied.

An incremental data coding technique is important in qualitative research for developing a logical and sequential framework of data categories at an increasing level of abstraction (Neuman, 2003). A three tiered approach (in ascending order of sophistication) was used for
data coding, namely open coding - axial coding - selective coding. This approach, in turn, facilitated the researcher drawing conclusions about concepts and relationships at an increasing level of abstraction, through a parallel process of data readings. In ascending order of sophistication, data readings were taken at the levels of literal - interpretive - reflexive for the respective data coding formats.

The process of reading the data is an important research technique in grounded theory development. Data readings allow the researcher to progressively build the story line for study group behaviour, from basic description through to inferable theory.

The data reading techniques for the current research program, and their associated coding formats, are now described more fully.

**4.4.2.1 Literal Readings**

Literal readings were taken at the most basic level (Mason, 2002), from the open data collected during initial observations and member interviews. Open data were coded progressively on the basis of observed events, interactions and language/ symbols. Open coding was descriptive in nature, and reflected a high level of differentiation between observed behaviours. Because of their descriptive nature, open coding formats necessarily reflected low levels of abstraction.

The first phase of the data analysis involved the researcher taking literal readings of the open coded data to construct an initial classification matrix for observed behaviours, using a descriptive approach. This stage of the data analysis was associated with the initial study group observations, where a wide range of behaviours and interactions were noted and classified in a preliminary way. There was an element of deliberate overlap between coding descriptors during this phase of the data collection and analysis, where for example one observed situation might be classified under two or more descriptors.
The importance of having such a highly differentiated and saturation-based approach to initial data collection lay in the strong framework it provided for the data reading processes. Having a comprehensive set of descriptors in the coding at this descriptive level ensured nothing was overlooked, and all potential patterns and relationships were identified from the outset. This saturation technique, in turn, gave way to a more selective approach, as the researcher was able to reflect on the data and identify emerging themes and concepts. This process occurred during subsequent higher level data readings.

The following are examples of category descriptors for team processes, which were derived from literal readings of open-coded data:

- briefing paper provided
- new supportive information
- new contra information
- clarification sought
- leader seeks views
- alternative view put
- member interrupts
- new views incorporated

Literal readings from this first-pass coding (Neumann, 2003) formed the basis for preliminary findings about team behaviour. Literal readings also provided a platform for subsequent interpretive and reflexive readings about themes, patterns and linkages within the data. The open-coded data categories were reflected as data nodes in the software package which was used to support the data analysis process. The open-coded data categories also provided a rich basis on which to build the data ordering and retrieval framework for the study. The second phase of the data reading process is now discussed.
4.4.2.2 Interpretive Readings

Interpretive readings identified preliminary relationships, themes, patterns, and temporal connections in the data (Mason, 2002). This process was facilitated by axially coding (Neuman, 2003) the initial data within broader conceptual categories, at a higher level of abstraction. Where preliminary relationships between concepts were identified, these were linked together tentatively for further testing. During this phase of the data analysis, incorporation of the quantitatively gathered data about team leadership style enriched the interpretive readings, by providing cross-referential data which could be triangulated with the data from observations and interviews. In a similar way, team profile data were cross-referenced during this phase.

The interpretive readings process progressively refined the research direction, and sharpened the focus of the study. Interpretive readings also identified the direction for more detailed exploration of a narrower range of phenomena which emerged as being important (Mason, 2002).

Interpretive readings were made by identifying relationships between the categories which were developed in the initial literal readings phase. Through this process, descriptive data about behaviour was arranged within higher order conceptual classifications. To illustrate the effect of axial coding and interpretive readings in practice, the literal reading categories in Section 4.5.1.1 have been grouped in Table 4.1 under relevant higher order classifications, at the next level of abstraction. This example is an applied illustration of the technique in use, and includes a situation of overlap, where one data category (new contra information) was considered to fit within more than one higher level data classification.
TABLE 4.1  
Example of Axial-Coding Classification Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretive Reading Classification</th>
<th>Literal Reading Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- effective information management</td>
<td>- briefing paper provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- new supportive information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- new contra information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- leader encourages dissent</td>
<td>- leader seeks views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- new contra information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- new views incorporated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- members support dissent</td>
<td>- alternative views put</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- clarification sought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- new views incorporated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The categories of data which emerged in this phase of the study were progressively summarized by the researcher, and were represented in the data analysis software package as data nodes, at a higher conceptual level. Using the modelling feature in the software package, the data nodes were able to be progressively linked together diagrammatically at higher levels of abstraction, in the form of a relationship web. The emerging relationship web represented the behavioural patterns which provided important insights in developing grounded theory.

The way the researcher applied the NVivo data analysis software package (Richards, 2005) to support the study is explained in detail in Section 4.6. However, for illustrative purposes, Figure 4.2 provides an example of how the data categories shown at Table 4.1 were able to be modelled in the software package to reflect relationships between concepts. Coding nodes which appear in blue denote descriptive data, which are then categorized at increasingly higher levels of abstraction as red, green and purple nodes. In this example, blue represents the lowest order data category, and purple the highest.
Figure 4.2 Example of Partial Model for Study Group Behaviour – NVivo

During the interpretive readings phase, the process of data triangulation was important, as it provided a means of enhancing researcher confidence in interpretations about team behaviours. While confidential interviews did provide an important level of cross-referential data, the research design also provided for tentative researcher conclusions to be validated against quantitatively-gathered data from the team leadership style inventories. The leadership style data provided a medium for validating tentative finding in the literal readings about team dynamics. For example, a tentative conclusion from team observations that a team leader did not encourage dissent within the team was able to be validated by a low leadership style rating on “intellectual stimulation” and “individual consideration” behaviours.
4.4.2.3 Analytical Memos

Analytical memos were important tools in the data analysis process. Analytical memos captured the researcher’s progressive reflections about themes, patterns and relationships between concepts, which emerged over successive iterations of the data collection methodology.

During the interpretive readings phase, analytical memos were developed following observation of each team meeting, and completion of associated confidential interviews. As inferred by the term “analytical”, these memos were associated with a stage in the study where the researcher was becoming more familiar with the dynamics of team processes, and was able to link together observed categories of behaviour in a qualitative way. During this stage of the research study, there was also a more selective approach to data coding. Coding activity became gradually more focused on key concepts and tentative phenomena which were beginning to be identified through the interpretive readings.

By axially coding the reflections contained within analytical memos, interpretive readings were able to be made about relationships between categories of team behaviour. Confidential interviews were important during this phase as a means of validating or disconfirming preliminary researcher interpretations of the data. For example, where team members were observed to be unhappy with a decision outcome, interviews were invaluable in developing insight about the implications of this for team process and outcome cohesiveness.

Through the use of analytical memos, the researcher was also able to note important patterns of behaviour within the teams. The recurring presence of these attributes in successive iterations of team observations implied a consistent pattern within team behaviours. Through the attributes functionality provided by the analytical software package NVivo (Richards, 2005), these patterns were able to be described at a very fine level of granularity.
4.4.2.4 Pattern Analysis

Patterning was an important concept in the successive approximation technique used for the current research program, as it allowed the researcher to build up a reliable picture of the way the teams behaved when they had effective, compared to ineffective processes and outcomes. Moreover, the patterning technique provided a vehicle for the qualitative data from the study to be expressed in nomothetic terms, so that relationships between factors and concepts could be measured, using correlation-based statistical analysis techniques. Nomothetic data analysis techniques allowed the researcher to identify which of the behavioural categories and factors had strong correlations between them. These categories and factors were then examined more fully in the context of grounded theory building.

Figure 4.3 provides an example of a partial pattern matrix for one of the teams. The matrix analyses the team's decision-making process over 10 decision items, against a number of process effectiveness categories which emerged from the study. The pattern matrices for all teams are developed and outlined in detail in Part 3 of the study. The example here is taken from the researcher’s working documents, and provides a practical insight into the process as it occurred in the field. This particular matrix was progressively developed for one team over the length of the study. After each meeting and subsequent interviews, a further line of analysis was added to the matrix to build up a composite picture of the team’s behavioural characteristics over time.

In the example matrix at Figure 4.3, column 1 denotes for each decision whether the overall team process was effective (green) or ineffective (red). The remaining columns indicate the presence or absence of team behaviours under six broad categories (shared interest is measured twice, i.e. at the beginning and conclusion of discussions). Using this technique, effective team processes were able to be identified as having particular attributes, as were ineffective team processes. The development of a behavioural matrix in this way allowed the researcher to delineate the emergent patterns in the process dynamics of the team, and also facilitated correlational analysis. Identifying data have been removed from the example at Figure 4.3.
**Team No. ( ) – Process Behaviour Matrix:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mtg:</th>
<th>Process evaluation</th>
<th>Shared interest at outset</th>
<th>Information management</th>
<th>Member dissent</th>
<th>Group reaction to dissent</th>
<th>Leader attitude to dissent</th>
<th>Group discussion</th>
<th>Shared interest at conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Ineffective</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Expressd</td>
<td>Not</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Decision description**

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

**Figure 4.3** Example of Pattern Matrix from Interpretive Readings
Interpretive readings of the data were taken in an iterative way. This process facilitated the identification of patterns of behaviour for each team. Using a subsequent process of reflexive data readings, the researcher was able to understand team process dynamics at the highest level of abstraction, and thereby build a theoretical framework to describe each team’s behaviour. The reflexive readings process is now discussed.

4.4.2.5 Reflexive Readings

Reflexive readings form the basis for macro theory building in qualitative research (Mason, 2002). During the reflexive readings phase, the researcher undertook a process of selectively coding (Neuman, 2003) at a more abstract level the connections, themes, and patterns which emerged in interpretive data readings. This process facilitated the construction of tentative theoretical relationships, which were further tested and confirmed through subsequent iterations of team observations and member interviews.

Reflexive readings typically occurred when the story line for the dynamics within each team reached a sufficient level of clarity for the researcher to infer a tentative theory for how each group functioned. Reflexive readings sought to understand the similarities and differences in how the teams behaved under similar, as well as different conditions. Any identified patterns could then be tested for the level of correlation between the relevant factors. As in the interpretive readings phase, correlation-based analysis was the central statistical technique used during reflexive readings. This technique allowed the researcher to validate qualitative relationships which emerged in the data, to inform the development of grounded theory.

In the reflexive readings stage, the researcher focused on a narrower range of phenomena at the highest level of abstraction, as the basis for theory building. The reflexive readings of cross-team data provided a sound platform for macro-level theory building about the behaviour of all teams in the study.

The data collection and analysis procedures outlined for the four individual teams is represented diagrammatically at Figure 4.4. Important features include:
The process for triangulation of data from four distinctive sources, namely contextual information; direct observation of teams; individual team member interviews; and confidential survey questionnaire data on team leader style.

- the iterative approach to collection and analysis of data through the progressive development of literal, interpretive and reflexive readings
- the use of differentiated coding conventions in support of the data collection and analysis methodology – from open-coding, through axial-coding, to selective-coding
- the iterative approach to the progressive development of grounded theory in relation to the functioning of each team

The process for between-group data analysis within the grounded theory methodology is now outlined, with a detailed explanation of the statistical techniques involved.

### 4.4.3 Between-Groups Data Analysis

Analytical comparison technique (Ragin, 1987) was used for analysis of data between the study teams. This technique was conducted using reflexive readings as the key statistical analysis tool for comparing cross-team data.

Comparisons were conducted of the data which emerged to identify common characteristics which were present where the teams exhibited similar behavioural patterns. This process provided the basis for method of agreement analysis (Ragin, 1987), a process whereby recurring characteristics and patterns are systematically identified in qualitative research studies.

In a similar way, where group behaviours were dissimilar, method of difference technique (Ragin, 1987) was used to draw inferential conclusions about a general behavioural theory. Method of difference is a complementary device for method of agreement. When the two techniques are used in tandem, they provide a high level of symmetry in identifying factor presence and absence within qualitative data analysis (Neuman, 2003).
The process of analytical comparison between groups was the principle device for macro-level grounded theory development. In practice, a level of cross-group analysis occurred throughout the study, though the more intensive theory development took place after individual group studies were completed. Cross-group comparisons played an important role in shaping areas for more concerted focus within groups.

Using the same basic technique outlined for within-team theory building, the researcher was able to use pattern analysis and correlation-based statistics to complete the story line about the characteristics of top level team behaviour in terms of the substantive research question. Similarities and differences identified between the teams were examined in the context of different contextual settings for the teams, such as differences in underlying team roles, differences in team demographics, and cultural considerations. The highly focused application of selective coding in relation to key phenomena which emerged within the story line was an important aspect of grounded theory development. Through correlation-based statistical
analysis technique, patterns developed by the researcher about participant behaviour were able to be examined to develop inferential relationships between concepts.

The grounded theory of top level team decision-making effectiveness which arose from the current research program is based on important qualitative relationships which emerged between concepts. Factors which were found to correlate to a strong degree formed the building blocks for grounded theory about how the teams in the study behaved, within the context of the substantive research question. The research methodology for between-team data analysis is represented diagrammatically at Figure 4.5.

The reflexive reading process which was central to the analytical comparison technique was augmented by the preparation of detailed analytical memos (Neuman, 2003). This technique took on a higher level of sophistication during the reflexive readings phase, where coding and reading of the data were undertaken at the highest level of abstraction, to identify phenomena of key relevance to the substantive research question.

![Data Analysis: Between Groups](image)

**Figure 4.5 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures: Between Groups**
The analytical memos collected throughout the study built a progressive picture in practical terms of how the story line developed through the course of the research, and as such constituted a progressive record of researcher findings and reflections. The analytical memos were foot-noted with references to data coding formats used in the analytical software packages. In this way, the researcher was able to effectively reference each conclusion in the study to the validating data analysis activity/process which supported it. The statistical software packages used for the data analysis are now discussed.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS SOFTWARE

Two statistical software packages were used to assist with the data analysis process.

NVivo (Richards, 2005) is a software package tailored specifically to the needs of qualitative research. The particular capability offered by NVivo relates to coding, classifying and ordering qualitative data from transcripts of meetings, member interviews and analytical memos. The coding formats in NVivo allowed the researcher to code data at an increasing level of abstraction, in accordance with the analytical reading formats described in Section 4.4.

The initial open coding classifications were reflected as “nodes” in the NVivo software. The software also allowed the researcher to code initial data in multiple ways under more than one “node”. NVivo permitted the assembling of this descriptive data under higher order category “nodes”, as part of the axial-coding function which took place as the study unfolded. These higher order category nodes facilitated interpretive readings of the data, as they represented a classification framework at the next conceptual level.

By using the “attributes” function in the NVivo software, these higher-order classification nodes were able to be assigned characteristics for each study group, in a way which allowed patterns to be observed in the data as they were developed. These patterns, in turn, were committed to analytical memos, and represented the basis for selectively coding the cross-
group data in the reflexive reading stage. An example of a pattern matrix for one study group which was developed through this technique was provided in Section 4.4.

Finally, the “modelling” facility in the NVivo software facilitated the researcher translating behavioural patterns into models for the way each study group behaved. Using the modelling capability in the software, nodes were assembled diagrammatically into relationship webs, at progressively higher level of abstraction. Relationship webs provided a conceptual picture for how categories of data related to each other, and in turn facilitated comparisons between study groups. By using the modelling capability in conjunction with recognized statistical analysis procedures, grounded theory was able to be progressively developed.

As well as being an excellent facility for analyzing complex data, NVivo also provided the researcher with a reliable tool for retrieving data, and for cross-referencing the conclusions in analytical memos to the associated data which supported them. The comprehensive story line developed by the researcher over the course of the study was annotated with foot note references to NVivo, in the interest of justifying findings, and reviewing and replicating the research study methodology.

The second software package used was SPSS (Norusis, 2005). This is a recognized computer based package for undertaking data analysis, and was used extensively throughout the study. SPSS provided a comprehensive and efficient means of analyzing correlations between categories of data which emerged in the data analysis process, and was able to be used effectively for analysing non-parametric data.

The MS Access program of the Microsoft Professional software suite was adopted for retaining and updating the background data on team demographics, which informed the ongoing contextual setting for each study group.
4.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY - SUMMARY

The current research study applied a grounded theory-like approach to the process of phenomenological enquiry undertaken around the research questions.

The data collection and analysis procedures for the study were designed to complement and enable development of a progressive story line in the research. The story line was an important enabler of grounded theory development. In qualitative research, a story line represents an evolving narrative, reflecting the gradual building up of understanding about the way research subjects behave in their natural settings. Story line technique is a particularly useful research tool for qualitative studies which unfold over an extended period.

While the underlying research design for the study was qualitative, the study employed a mixed-method approach to data collection and analysis. This approach comprised a combination of qualitatively and quantitatively collected data, along with qualitative analysis to develop grounded theory.

The data collection and analysis process was organised to complement the mixed-method componentry, and to facilitate triangulation of data (Herman & Egri, 2002) which arose from multiple sources. Notwithstanding the mixed-method design, the central stream of research activity was qualitative in nature, and was based on observation of teams within their natural settings, as well as confidential interviews with team members. Considerations about the different contextual settings for each team were also incorporated within the data collection and analysis methodology.

The data analysis process comprised descriptive as well as inferential data, in the form of researcher notes and analytical memos. Using a structured approach to data coding, readings were able to be made of data at increasing levels of abstraction, to form conclusions about relationships between concepts. Through an iterative process of observe – analyse – re-observe, tentative conclusions were able to be developed and tested about the way the study
groups functioned. These conclusions were then subjected to further analysis and testing through subsequent iterations of data collection and analysis, and comprehensive data triangulation techniques (Herman & Egri, 2002). The NVivo software package (Richards, 2005) facilitated this process through the data categorization, modelling and attribution functionality inherent in this software application.

A framework of analytical memos developed at an increasing level of abstraction provided the basis for progressive story line development. Using established qualitative research techniques for data analysis within and between groups, important concepts were identified in the evolving story line narrative. Using an innovative patterning technique, qualitative data were able to be converted into a format for correlation analysis to confirm qualitative relationships between concepts. Correlations which were found to be strong confirmed the qualitative conclusions about key phenomena and their relationships. These conclusions, in turn, informed the componentry of a grounded theory for how the study groups behaved, in the context of the substantive research question.
PART 3

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS
Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.
Introduction to Part 3

Part 3 develops the conceptual findings which arose from the current research program.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the two higher order categories of findings which were identified during the data analysis. These are team process orientation and team outcome orientation. Chapter 7 explains how the characteristics of these two higher order categories were found to combine in distinctive ways under two near-core categories of top level team behaviour, namely relational disposition and transactional disposition. Because of the specific patterns identified in team behaviour when teams displayed a relational, compared to a transactional disposition, these near-core categories were identified as two parts of a core category which occurred at the highest level of abstraction. This core category is a basic social process of dyadic decision-making, which is discussed in Chapter 8.

Throughout Chapters 5 to 8, the development of grounded theory is explained. In particular, these chapters illustrate the progressive understanding of behavioural relationships which emerged through successive iterations of team observations and analysis. This process identified the presence of phenomena at increasing levels of abstraction. Throughout Chapters 5 to 8, conclusions are supported with examples from the qualitative and quantitative data. However, in the interests of maintaining research subject confidentiality, identifying aspects have been removed from the data exampled.

Within each chapter, lower level categories and their characteristics are discussed in detail. All categories were developed through the grounded theory methodology explained in Part 2. The progressive story line for top level team behaviour which emerged from the data analysis is reflected in the categories of findings, and the relationships posited between them.

The conceptual framework of categories, represented at an ascending level of abstraction, is shown at Figure 5.1. Chapters 5 to 8 discuss each of these key categories in turn, from the lowest to highest levels of abstraction, within the hierarchical framework of Figure 5.1.
Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour

Figure 5.1 Framework of Data Categories

Chapter 5
Higher Order Category: Team Process Orientation
- High consensual commitment
- Low consensual commitment

Lower Order Category: Interest in Outcome
- Shared interest
- Harmony of interest
- Disharmony of interest

Lower Order Category: Information Sharing
- Base level information
- Accordant new information
- Discordant new information

Lower Order Category: Team Climate
- Dissenting behaviour
- Peer support for dissent
- Leader support for dissent

Chapter 6
Higher Order Category: Team Outcome Orientation
- Act in partnership mode
- Act in independent mode

Lower Order Category: Situational Limiting Factors

Chapter 7
Near-Core Categories:
- Relational Disposition
- Transactional Disposition

Chapter 8
Basic Social Process: Dyadic Decision-Making

Lower Order Category: Leader Decision Orientation
- Relationship emphasis in leadership style
- Partnership intent

Lower Order Category: Team Member Decision Orientation
- Relationship emphasis in job role
- Partnership intent
Chapter 5

TEAM PROCESS ORIENTATION: A HIGHER ORDER CATEGORY OF TOP LEVEL TEAM BEHAVIOUR

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In grounded theory-based research, a higher order category typically emerges from the data collection process. A higher order category is one within which a number of lower order emergent categories and their relationships can be grouped in a conceptual way, to facilitate understanding of phenomena present in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Two higher order categories arose from the current research study. The first was that of team process orientation. This chapter focuses on that particular higher order category, which is placed conceptually within the categories of findings at Figure 5.2.

In all of the observations and interviews which were conducted, there was a recurring theme in the story line that top level teams acted either cohesively or not cohesively in terms of their internal team processes. There was an indication that a team’s orientation towards effective processes depended on a complex interplay of factors, which were identified as lower order categories. The current research program found that team process behaviour as it related to decision-making varied on a decision-by-decision basis, depending on the presence and interplay of these factors each time.

In other words, one of the higher order categories which emerged in this research study about top level team decision-making behaviour was that of team process orientation. The higher order category of team process orientation is represented in Figure 5.1, which depicts the
framework of data categories which emerged from the current research program. It is from this framework that the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making discussed in Chapter 9 is drawn. All categories were generated by the grounded theory methodology outlined in Part 2.

Discussion about the nature of this higher order category centres on the conceptual sub-categories of information sharing; team climate; and interest in outcome. In this chapter, each of these sub-categories and their properties is discussed in turn, preceded by an exploration of the nature of team process orientation.

Discussion of this higher order category is supported by summaries of data which arose from the theoretical coding applied. Data analysis at progressively higher level of abstraction is incorporated within the discussion to facilitate an understanding of how concepts emerged, and how their relationships were identified (Glaser, 1978; Swanson, 1986).

Throughout this chapter, the iterative nature of grounded theory development is illustrated by the progressive construction and description of relationships which emerged between phenomena. The iterative nature of theory development is reflected in Figures 5.3 through 5.8, and 5.10 to 5.11. These figures reflect in diagrammatic form the progressive build up of understanding about concepts and their relationships which occurred through the data analysis process.

The chapter begins with an outline of key place markers in the research about team process orientation; then provides an exploration of the concept as it applies to the current research question. A detailed discussion then follows of findings in the current research program, including relationships between concepts. The chapter concludes with a summary of key conclusions about team process orientation indicated by the current research program, and establishes a link to the discussion of the higher order category of team outcome orientation, which occurs in Chapter 6.
Chapter 5: Team Process Orientation

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.

Figure 5.2 Higher Order Category of Team Process Orientation

Chapter 8
Basic Social Process: Dyadic Decision-Making

Chapter 7
Near-Core Categories:
- Relational Disposition
- Transactional Disposition

Chapter 6
Higher Order Category: Team Outcome Orientation

Higher Order Category: Team Process Orientation
- High consensual commitment
- Low consensual commitment

Lower Order Category: Interest in Outcome
- Shared interest
- Harmony of interest
- Disharmony of interest

Lower Order Category: Information Sharing
- Base level information
- Accordant new information
- Discordant new information

Lower Order Category: Team Climate
- Dissenting behaviour
- Peer support for dissent
- Leader support for dissent

Near-Core Categories:
- Relational Disposition
- Transactional Disposition

Basic Social Process: Dyadic Decision-Making
5.2 TEAM PROCESS ORIENTATION – EXTANT RESEARCH

Research in the area of team processes is quite diverse. The introductory chapters to this study canvass the different dimensions of this complex issue. The literature review at Chapter 2 explores in detail the importance *inter alia* of team membership diversity; effective management of dissent and conflict; assurance of procedural justice; and adoption of an appropriate leadership style within teams.

As a theoretical reference point for the current research program, Edmondson, Roberto and Watkins’ integrated theory of team effectiveness (2003) was considered to be of interest. Edmondson and his colleagues sought to integrate the diverse elements of team effectiveness in the extant research within a single normative model. This particular theory was also of interest because it had not been empirically tested, and therefore the relationships posited between phenomena in the model had not been overly prescribed by the authors. For this reason, the Edmondson et al. (2003) model was considered to provide a good starting point around which to build initial observations and interviews in the current research program, while allowing for new phenomena and insights to emerge within the grounded theory methodology.

Edmondson et al. (2003) propose that management of team process is the major factor affecting the performance of teams. They cite the extensive research on team process loss and dysfunction (Steiner, 1972; Amason, 1996; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990; Hickson et al., 1986; Janis, 1972) as justification for this view. Edmondson and his colleagues propose an alternative way of thinking about team effectiveness, which integrates the research streams of team demographics (Hambrick, 1994) on the one hand, and normative theory of how leaders make decisions through teams (Vroom & Jago, 1998) on the other. In their model, Edmondson et al. (2003: 232) propose that “effectiveness depends both on team composition, and on how the team leader manages team processes to reflect situational factors”.

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.
Situational factors are seen as significant by Edmondson and his colleagues because they propose that higher level decision-making teams are distinguishable from other teams in that they face “ambiguous and ill structured problems” (2003: 301), where they must draw on a range of information to properly define problems and create new knowledge. In this context, a team’s ability to deal over time with “unstructured task streams” (2003: 302) will vary according to team stability and the nature of each task.

Drawing heavily on research that in top level teams, decision-making occurs more along the lines of negotiation than collaboration (Bazerman, 1998), Edmondson et al. propose that team effectiveness in the “team-situation relationship” (2003: 233) is dependent on:

- situation specific information – the availability and quality of information shared between group members around a specific decision task; and
- situation specific interests – the extent to which group members have a shared interest in the outcome of a specific decision task

Reflecting on the body of research about team dysfunction, Edmondson et al. propose that lack of symmetry in either of these information or interest factors may lead to process loss (Steiner, 1972), and a reduction in team effectiveness in a specific situation. Furthermore, they propose that particular aspects of the way team leaders manage group processes will have a moderating effect on lack of symmetry in either information or member interest. The moderating factors which Edmondson et al. propose are:

- power centralisation – the extent to which power is centralised in the team, rather than shared between members – increasing the negative effect of any asymmetry
- psychological safety – the presence of a climate of interpersonal trust and risk taking – decreasing the negative effect of any asymmetry

Using this broad theoretical backdrop established by the extant research, the researcher was able to approach the current research program with an initial lens through which to view team processes. This provided an initial broad framework for early observations of team behaviour,
without constraining the overall qualitative methodology. The research design comprised a high level of the freedom for other relationships and phenomena to emerge over progressive iterations of observation and analysis.

The findings of the about the higher order category of team process orientation are now discussed.

### 5.3 TEAM PROCESS ORIENTATION - AN EXPLORATION

In the current research program, the category under which other team process factors could be summarized was team process orientation.

As an indicator of process orientation, the researcher adopted Dooley and Fryxell’s maxim (1999) that effective team processes yield two important outcomes, namely consensus by team members about the decision itself, and commitment by team members to implementing the decision.

Dooley and Fryxell (1999: 389) propose that the traditional view of encouraging dissent during decision-making, yet expecting members to demonstrate consensus and solidarity once the decision is made, is now outdated. They believe “a modern view is that the strategic decision-making process itself affects both strategy formulation and implementation”. To support this view, they cite research by Schweiger and Sandberg (1991), which establishes that conflict is unavoidable in situations where groups of people come together to make decisions, and management of this conflict to a satisfactory outcome for all parties is central to the effective enactment of decisions. Amason (1996: 128) puts a more compelling edge to the concept of
achieving mutual interest in outcomes, proposing that “to be successful over time, top management teams must produce quality and consensus on every decision”.

Using the extant research as a reference point, team process orientation in decision-making was dimensionalised in the current research program as being either effective or ineffective, based on whether teams were able to develop high levels of consensus and commitment, compared to low levels. This meant that teams were found to have an orientation towards team processes which either did, or did not develop consensus and commitment to decisions. Consequently, discussion of team processes in this study centres on the factors which were observed to either promote or limit the achievement of consensus and commitment in the context outlined.

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the contemporary theory of team decision-making effectiveness by Edmondson et al. (2003) was used as an important reference point around which to build initial team observations, while allowing for new insights to emerge. In this study, the grounded theory methodology - applied in a highly situational way - in some respects supported the overall themes in the Edmondson et al. model, and in other respects provided new insights about effective team decision-making processes.

In the present research, therefore, the researcher looked at the relationships between team process factors, and the presence or absence of member consensus and commitment about decision outcomes. The primary source of data was direct observation of top level teams as they went about the process of making decisions. Further triangulating data were collected from confidential interviews, where team members were invited to reflect on team processes generally, as well as on specific situations and dynamics which were observed during meetings.

The two dimensions of team process effectiveness are now discussed to provide a contextual setting for the more detailed analysis which follows in this chapter. In this discussion, the dimensions are described as “high consensus and commitment” (effective), and “low consensus and commitment” (ineffective).
5.3.1 Dimensions of Team Process Orientation

Within the terms of the current research program, Team Process Orientation was dimensionalised as being effective or ineffective, according to whether the teams exhibited “high consensus and commitment” or “low consensus and commitment” respectively. The concepts of consensus and commitment are now explained in the context of team process orientation.

The extant literature indicates that teams may have the appearance of having reached consensus on an issue, but may lack commitment at an individual level to follow through (Dooley & Fryxell, 1999). This is often the result of group dysfunction dynamics such as group think, where there is pressure within a group for members to be seen to agreeing to a course of action. For this reason, the data collection and analysis procedures were designed to identify situations where, notwithstanding the appearance of consensus, there was not a commitment on the part of all members to the agreed course of action.

In the current program of research, the researcher concluded that consensus and commitment had been reached when, on all available indicators, there appeared to be a commitment on the part of all team members to the decision itself, and to its implementation.

Initial readings about whether consensus and commitment were present were taken from the verbal and non-verbal cues of team members. These cues were identified from the preliminary open-coded data, and included:

- open vis-à-vis closed physical demeanour
- supportive vis-à-vis argumentative word choice
- receptive vis-à-vis dismissive tone of voice
- open vis-à-vis closed consideration of proposals
- accommodating vis-à-vis limiting behaviour in allowing discussion to continue
- flexible vis-à-vis rigid approach to other suggestions
- inclusive vis-à-vis exclusive clarifying

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- nodding vis-à-vis shaking of head
- convivial vis-à-vis serious atmosphere at conclusion of discussion

With contentious issues, more reliable indicators of consensus were whether conflicting points of view had been put forward and argued by dissenting members, and the apparent disposition of dissenters at the conclusion of discussions.

Verbal cues were important in developing preliminary open-coded data from team observations, and establishing *prima facie* whether consensus and commitment had been reached. In some situations during this initial observation phase there were contradictory indications in the data. Examples of this contradiction included situations where, in spite of not raising an actual objection, a member appeared not to be in agreement with a decision through some particular verbal and/or non-verbal cue on their part. These contradictory indications were expressly noted for further exploration through individual interviews, to ascertain whether in fact the individual concerned did agree with the decision or not. The appearance of contradictory data, and the associated processes for resolution, provided important insight from a grounded theory point of view about the true nature of team dynamics, vis-à-vis the apparent nature of team dynamics. These situations were coded after the matters had been fully explored, under the interpretive coding node “appearance of agreement but member not convinced”.

In one case, for example, there was discussion about implementing a new quality initiative, where one team member commented, “… but just a little bit of caution about getting over-process with it and missing the objective. This was an issue in the past (name) if you recall with what was it called QM? TQM?” [data, Team 1]. In a subsequent confidential discussion held with this team member, it was apparent they did not agree with the decision, and they indicated further that other members may also have disagreed. This team member said to the researcher, “It is being pursued vigorously by (names), who have direct responsibility. Driving it across the management team is the first step. (name) and I are the lone voices of pragmatism.” [data, Team 1]
In another case involving a different team, a dissenter was observed to comment in fairly emotional tones about a decision, “Why am I always the one that has to be defeated?” In a subsequent confidential interview, the team member commented that in relation to the decision, “… instead of having reasoned debate it’s more like: we’ve done the work, we’ve made the decision, shut up and do it.” [data, Team 3]

Using a combination of verbal and non-verbal cues, together with follow up confidential interviews, it was possible to develop interpretive readings through axially coding data from observations and interview comments. For each team, these interpretive readings were considered to provide a reliable indicator of situations where consensus and commitment had, and had not been reached about a decision. In particular, where members who dissented during team discussions indicated during confidential interviews that they continued to have residual concerns about implementing the decision, this was taken as indicating a lack of commitment by all team members to follow through.

The following is an example of a member’s comments during a confidential interview which were considered to indicate their lack of commitment to implementing a decision:

“So I just wanted to try and avoid that, and not get a lot of busy work going on for something that you know is going to generate some level of cynicism I suppose among staff. It needs to be done in a way that’s fairly natural … and you weave it into the work practices. Having someone come along and try to dump it on top was what I was trying to avoid.” [data, Team 1]

The researcher found that the highly embedded research methodology provided a reliable platform for drawing conclusions about member commitment to follow through, using a similar configuration of literal and interpretive readings to that used for examining member consensus.

Through interpretive and reflexive readings of the data, team behaviour was able to be classified in a way which provided insight as to each team’s overall process orientation. No team was found to perform perfectly in terms of reaching consensus and commitment on all decisions, and at the same time no team failed to achieve these on any decision. In this sense, team reactions were subject to situational factors relating to the type of decision issue, and the
team dynamics which occurred around the team discussion. However, notwithstanding the situational nature of team processes, the teams were found to perform quite differently from each other in terms of the overall frequency with which they reached consensus and commitment. This dynamic indicated, by extension, a difference in their overall orientation towards effective team process.

The implications of their process orientation for the teams in the current research program are now briefly summarised. This, in turn, provides context for the detailed examination of factors which were found to contribute to effective and ineffective team process orientation, which are discussed in Sections 5.4 to 5.6.

### 5.3.2 Team Process Orientation – Implications

Reflexive readings which arose by selectively coding common, as well as unique characteristics, both across and between teams, indicated that lack of member consensus and lack of commitment to follow through was not an uncommon occurrence.

Based on observations and individual interviews, of the forty (40) team decision processes observed (10 for each team), lack of consensus or commitment to follow through were concluded to be present in 20% of the decisions made across the four teams. Either lack of consensus or lack of commitment was taken to indicate ineffective team process. This conclusion is supported by the extant research which suggests that in a genuinely effective team decision-making process, both consensus and commitment are reached. For this reason an important phenomenon of consensual commitment emerged as the appropriate indicator of team process effectiveness. Consensual commitment was deemed to have been reached when members agreed to a decision, and were also committed to following it through. The presence or lack of consensual commitment in relation to each decision was tested during subsequent iterations of theoretical sampling. This testing was conducted with team members through individual interviews, with particular focus on the perspective of members who had dissented during discussions.
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The incidence of ineffective team process (lack of consensual commitment) for each team is summarised at Table 5.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of decisions which did not reflect consensual commitment by all team members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These effectiveness data were considered to be potentially of concern, given the indication on the extant literature that teams should aim for consensus and commitment on every decision (Amason, 1996). To understand more fully the process factors which led to ineffective outcomes, a detailed analysis was undertaken of the dynamics of team processes as they related to the functioning of the four teams. Three lower order categories of findings emerged during this analysis. These are outlined at Table 5.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher Order Category of Team Process Orientation – Lower Order Categories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information Sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Climate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest in Outcome</td>
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</table>

Each of these lower order categories is now explored in detail, and conclusions are drawn about their relationship to the higher order category of team process orientation.
5.4 LOWER ORDER CATEGORY: INFORMATION SHARING

This research study identified information sharing as an important lower order category of team process orientation. In the observations of teams during the decision-making process and in the attendant individual interviews, this issue emerged as important in team decision-making dynamics.

Sharing of information had a strong influence on team members’ forming harmony of interest around the outcome of decisions, and in turn reaching consensual commitment about decisions.

The current research program also identified that the category of information sharing had important properties which played distinctive roles in their own right, and in combination with other properties. This finding about the importance of information sharing was broadly consistent with the theory of Edmondson et al. (2003), who posit a role for information symmetry in effective decision-making processes.

The properties in the lower order category of information sharing are set out in Table 5.3, and are now explored in more detail.

<p>| TABLE 5.3 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Order Category of Information Sharing – Properties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base Level Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accordant New Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discordant New Information</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5.4.1. **Property of Information Sharing: Base Level Information**

Observations of team decision-making processes identified that preliminary background information was invariably provided to the team prior to the discussion process which took place around a decision item. Literal readings of observation notes identified that typically, base level information took the form of background papers/submissions; a verbal briefing provided by the team leader or the sponsor of an item; or a guest speaker who had expertise in a particular area.

Where a decision item was sponsored, the sponsor was usually the person who required a decision to be made by the team, and invariably knew the most background information about the issue involved.

Figure 5.3 represents the decision items discussed across the four teams which were observed during the study. It shows the frequency with which information was provided to the team prior to discussion, by way of background papers, verbal briefings, or expert guest speakers. Significantly, there was a high level of presence of base level information (in 70-100% of decisions), as well as a high degree of consistency between the teams on this indicator. These data are summarised at Table 5.4. In the few cases where base level information was not present, this was typically where members had raised a matter under general business as a question, and the team discussion had therefore taken place on an information-neutral basis.
5.4.2 Property of Information Sharing: Accordant New Information

From the team observations, it was apparent that once an issue or proposal had been outlined, there would typically be a discussion, which involved *inter alia* the provision of new information by members around the discussion item. This would take the form of additional information from the sponsor of the item, as well as from other members who had relevant
insights on the subject. For the purposes of discussing the sharing of information within the teams, the issue of members arguing a different point of view (as distinct from merely providing new information) is dealt with separately under the lower order category of Team Climate at Section 5.5. Of course, arguing a different point of view and providing new information occurred simultaneously in many cases.

In most observations, the sponsor of an item provided new information which supported or was in accord with the base level (or pre-discussion) information available to the team. In one case, for example, the sponsor of an item provided accordant new information in relation to the role of a change advisory board. They said, “Anything that’s an emergency, like say for instance if a virus hit, and someone in networking had to do something quickly, they’d put through what’s (sic) an emergency change …” [data, Team 2]

In other observations, new information which supported or was in accord with the base level (or pre-discussion) information was provided by a different team member. In the following example from the same discussion, another team member provided accordant new information to clarify some confusion in the team about how they could keep track of current changes:

“I would think that you would have access to (program), and if you go through my action items there you’d have an attachment like that … every single thing that goes before (the board) and is likely to be processed is in there … all of you can access it, you can get in and have a look at the entire thing.” [data, Team 2]

Instances where accordant new information was provided by item sponsors, by the leader, and by other team members were identified in literal readings and associated open-coding formats. In the interpretive readings of the data, it was found that the source of accordant new information was not relevant, in that the source had no discernible influence on the way the teams processed new information. The reflexive readings indicated that irrespective of its source, accordant new information was assimilated by the teams in a similar way. This is perhaps not surprising, since this sort of new information invariably did not contradict the information already available to the teams.
The frequency of provision of accordant new information in relation to each decision item is outlined in Figure 5.4, column 3 (entitled “Acc”). The frequency with which this activity occurred within the teams in the study is summarised at Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Accordant New Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>% of decisions where accordant new information present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While base level information and accordant new information were noted to occur together in most cases, non-parametric statistical analysis of correlations (Spearman rank order) indicated there was no strong correlation between these items. It was, therefore, concluded there was nothing to indicate that the presence of one affected the likelihood the other would be present.
This was, therefore, taken to be a randomly occurring phenomenon, in that accordant new information was provided or not provided according to whether members felt they had supporting information to contribute to a discussion.

### 5.4.3 Property of Information Sharing: Discordant New Information

Just as new information was provided which was in accord with the base level (pre-discussion) information, there were also instances observed where new information was discordant in nature. Such information was typically provided by team members whose roles overlapped to some degree with the sponsor of a discussion item. Because of this overlap, they were able to contribute new information from a different perspective, and this was sometimes found to contradict or challenge the information already available to the team.

As in the lower order category of *accordant new information*, provision of discordant new information is discussed separately from the issue of arguing an alternative point of view, though these properties were noted to occur simultaneously in many cases.

The following is an example where, in the same discussion about the change advisory board referred to in Section 5.4.2, new information was provided by another team member which conflicted, or was in discord with, both the base level (pre-discussion), and accordant new information available to the team. The team member concerned asked, “Is it possible to get a list of the things that come through the change management committee? The reason I ask is that sometimes not everyone thinks of everyone who might be affected … we have to do computer training often and we’re not consulted” [data, Team 2]. This new information was noted to strike a note of discord in the discussion, as it indicated an administrative procedure was not working as effectively as the team believed.

Using the same data analysis procedures described for identifying and categorising base level and accordant new information, the frequency of discordant new information was identified. This is reflected in Figure 5.5, column 4 (entitled “Dsc”). The frequency with which this occurred within the teams in the study is summarised at Table 5.6.
Using non-parametric statistical analysis techniques (Spearman rank order), discordant new information was found to have no correlation with accordant new information. It was concluded, therefore, that there was no relationship between the presence of one type of information, and the presence of the other type. However, the marked difference between the teams in relation to the frequency of provision of accordant and discordant new information was noted. The implications of this are now discussed.
5.4.4 Lower Order Category: Information Sharing - Implications

Observation of team processes indicated an important role for sharing of information in creating team cohesiveness in decision-making. Through interpretive readings of the data, information was categorised as base level information made available prior to discussions; accordant new information which arose during discussions; and discordant new information which arose during discussions.

Interpretive readings of data between the teams indicated that of the three categories of information, there was a consistently lower incidence of discordant new information provided, compared to accordant new information. In Team 2 for example, discordant new information was present in 40% of discussions, while accordant new information was present in 90% of discussions. The possible reasons for this marked difference in the type of information present were considered worthy of further reflection, in view of the proposition by Dooley and Fryxell (1999) and Leifer and Mills (1996) that the central role of decision teams is information processing. In this context, valuing the presence of “for and against” forms of information during team discussions seemed to be an important principle for a well balanced decision outcome, and for providing a level of insurance against typical process losses which could occur in team decision-making, such as group think (Janis, 1972).

A possible explanation for the lower incidence of discordant new information may have been that within these decision teams there were already high underlying levels of trust in perceived expert views, and it was therefore more likely that accordant (rather than discordant) new information would be introduced during discussions. In this case, the less frequent occurrence of discordant new information might have meant nothing more than team members were thinking along fundamentally similar lines about issues, notwithstanding risks of process loss. If this explanation were to hold true, it would have been expected that at the end of the information exchange process, team members would have invariably reached a situation of harmony of interests in the outcome of decisions. However, in exploring this issue further, this was found not to be the case. In Figure 5.6, column 5 (entitled “Intrst”) illustrates the outcome of team discussions, in terms of whether harmony of interest was evident. While this
property is discussed in detail in Section 5.6.2, harmony of interest was deemed to have been reached when, at the conclusion of discussions, the interests of all members in a decision outcome (while not necessarily shared) were not in conflict. Table 5.7 summarises the differences in the incidence of this phenomenon between the teams. This table also outlines the percentage of situations where discordant new information and disharmony of interest occurred together.

The data from the reflexive readings outlined at Figure 5.6 indicate that harmony of interest was present to a high degree among team members whenever new information accorded with the initial base level information. However, the reflexive comparisons indicate that where discordant new information was present, the teams were not as effective in reaching harmony of interest. On the surface of it, this result would present cause for concern in terms of imperatives discussed in the extant research about teams reaching consensual commitment on all decisions (Amason, 1996).

Instances were identified from reflexive readings (and subsequently confirmed through team member interviews) where, at the conclusion of the information exchange process, there was residual disharmony of interest among members about decision outcomes. The lower order category of interest in outcome is discussed in detail at Section 5.6. However this category is introduced at this point for the purposes of establishing an introductory relationship between the lower order categories of information sharing and interest in outcome. The data at Figure 5.6 indicate that where discordant new information was present, team processes often were not sufficiently robust for the team to reach a situation where there was harmony of interest among members about the decision outcome.

In the current research program, this finding is important in understanding the role played by the sharing of information within the teams.
5.4.5 **Lower Order Category: Information Sharing - Conclusion**

In summary, reflexive readings of the data indicated that the teams were not successful in reaching harmony of interest at the conclusion of discussions where conflicting information was present in 25% of situations in the best case, and 60% of situations in the worst case examples. Moreover, in three of the four teams, the presence of conflicting information could not be processed into harmony of interest around outcomes in at least 50% of decisions.
While no correlation could be found between the presence of accordant new information and harmony of interest, by contrast, a positive correlation ($\rho=.61, p<.01$) was found between the presence of discordant new information, and residual disharmony of interest. While the issue of member interest in the outcome of decision-making is discussed in detail at Section 5.6, the specific property of “harmony of interest” is introduced at this point because of its significance in the reflexive readings taken over the data between the teams. The finding is also introduced at this point by way of making a link to the discussion of the next lower order category of team climate.

In conclusion, from an information processing point of view, there was found to be a qualitatively strong relationship between the presence of discordant information, and teams failing to reach harmony of interest around decision outcomes. This dynamic was considered to be worthy of further exploration, given its potential impact on members reaching consensual commitment about decisions. The fact that three teams reflected residual disharmony of interest by team members in more than 50% of cases where discordant new information was present was of particular interest. Moreover, the relatively low incidence of discordant information occurring with disharmony of interest in Team 2 (compared to other teams) indicated there may have been factors about differences in team climate which contributed to this phenomenon. In particular, the way dissent was managed within the teams was thought to be potentially of relevance and interest. The lower order category of team climate is now explored.
5.5 LOWER ORDER CATEGORY: TEAM CLIMATE

This research study identified team climate as an important lower order category, within the higher order category of team process orientation. In the observations of teams during the decision-making process and in the attendant individual interviews, this issue emerged as significant in team decision-making dynamics.

Team climate was observed to have an important influence on the harmony of interest among team members in relation to decision outcomes. This dynamic, in turn, impacted on teams reaching consensual commitment about decisions. Team climate was also an important factor in creating the necessary dynamics within the team for effective information sharing.

This study identified a number of important properties for the lower order category of team climate that played distinctive roles in their own right and in combination, in influencing the process orientation of the teams. These findings were broadly consistent with a wide range of research about the importance of appropriate team climate for limiting process loss within teams (Janis, 1972; Baron, Kerr & Miller, 1993; De Dreu & West, 2001). More recently, in their integrated theory of team effectiveness, Edmondson et al. (2003) posited an important role for team climate factors (namely psychological safety and sharing of power) in creating the necessary dynamics for effectively managing dissent and conflict, and reaching consensus.

The properties of the lower order category of team climate are set out in Table 5.8, and are now explored in detail.
5.5.1 Property of Team Climate: Dissenting Behaviour

Dissenting behaviour was observed to be present in the teams in some situations during team decision-making. Dissent was evident when members expressed a point of view that was contrary to the tenor of the discussion.

Literal readings taken of team observation data indicated that dissenting behaviour could be identified by the use of language which conveyed disagreement with the direction of a discussion, or disagreement with a point made by another team member. Examples of language associated with dissenting behaviour noted in the data coding and analysis included:

Team 1:

“… but just a little bit of caution about getting over-process with it and missing the objective.”

“I’m just saying the most people aren’t going to visit the HR web site, that’s all.”

Team 2:

“I feel very uncomfortable being asked to do this in half an hour without proper preparation …”

“I think it would be opportune to ask a couple of questions. Why can’t we have a smaller group with …?”

Team 3:

“A few seem to have systems time associated with them, and no one’s spoken to me about them …”

“Yeah, sorry but what I do take issue with is that we had a preceding instruction about …”
Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.

Team 4:

“This survey is how our clients are satisfied with what we’re doing, but we’re not looking outside the boundaries of (the department).”

“We haven’t done any real market research on this.”

5.5.1.1 Impact of Dissenting Behaviour

Interpretive readings of the data constructs indicated that dissenting behaviour was important in the process of information-sharing within the teams. In all but two cases across the four groups, dissenting behaviour also introduced discordant new information to team discussions. The following is an example of dissenting behaviour during a discussion about a proposed pricing model for providing back-up data storage to internal organisational clients. The dissenter’s new information was noted to add a new dimension to the discussion. The dissenter’s comment was:

“I’d be advising client not to go to this. Buy two of them (the alternatives), plug one to another and you can get your storage that way. Because they’re out there, they’ve got research grants from the ARC and you charge them 14 grand, that’s a PhD student they haven’t got.” [data, Team 4]

Interpretive data readings indicated dissenting behaviour in some cases changed the course of the debate during team discussions, as in the example provided. Prior to the dissenting behaviour, this particular discussion had been concerned with potential funding sources for establishing a proposed data storage capacity. However, following the dissenter’s comments - which were in effect a practical reminder to the team about market realities - the discussion turned to the viability of introducing a service which was some ten times more expensive than other options available commercially. In the subsequent discussion about the wisdom of continuing down the initial path proposed, the team leader eventually concluded, “One of the problems I have here is it’s just not going to see (sic) - it’s a dead service walking.” [data, Team 4]

The interpretive readings indicated dissenting behaviour in most observations had the effect of intensifying the discussion process. This finding was consistent with the conclusions of De
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Dreu and West (2001: 1192), that “minority dissent is surprising, and leads majority members to wonder why the minority think the way it does”.

5.5.1.2 Manifestations of Dissenting Behaviour

The reflexive readings of dissenting behaviour and its effect indicated that dissent in some respects manifested in similar ways across the four teams, and in some respects varied between the teams. The data coding indicated dissent took a number of forms. In most cases, dissent represented an alternative point of view which was woven quite seamlessly into the discussion process, in a way which was not threatening to other members. The fact that a dissenting view was most often based around provision of new information appeared to be an important factor in team members accepting dissenting views in a constructive way.

In some cases, the interpretive readings suggested dissent had something of a sense of higher purpose on the part of the dissenter, for example when the views of staff were being introduced to the group. An example of this was when a team member commented, “… there was a response from my team that individuals shouldn’t be singled out. A number of my team feel that individuals, if you’re trying to build teams, singling out individuals for rewards is contrary to the process, and quite a number of them feel that way …” [data, Team 2]

Another type of dissent behaviour which had a positive impact on team discussions was associated with introducing a client perspective. This seemed to also have a sense of higher purpose in some respects, and was observed to have a high impact on the discussion, probably because of the underlying importance of client service to the organisations involved in the study. In one example of dissent behaviour in relation to a proposed survey questionnaire, a member commented, “… there was no avenue for customers to nominate, so it’s all staff nominating. You know, should there be avenues for a customer or a client really to have input into this …” [data, Team 2]

In other situations, dissent behaviour was more subtle, for instance through members suggesting there was insufficient information, or that an expert in the area should be invited to
address the team before a decision was made. In the following example, the proposal to obtain additional information was put in a way which didn’t threaten the team member who was the sponsor of the decision item. The dissenter asked:

“Is it possible to get a list of the things that come through the change management committee? The reason I ask is that sometimes not everyone thinks of everyone who might be affected … but I’m just thinking of others (name) where the people at the committee – you don’t always recognise that others have a stake in it. It’s not you, it’s just human nature …” [data, Team 2]

Reflexive readings also indicated that in some team environments, dissent was more direct, with members quite openly challenging some deeper orthodoxy about the culture of the organisation. In these situations, dissenting members were much more direct and forthright in putting their views. An example was when a member commented, “What I’m getting at is if everything was ok, and we had a good culture, then we wouldn’t have problems with silos or friction between groups. Now there is anecdotal evidence that we do have those problems …” [data, Team 4]

Not surprisingly, direct and very challenging dissent was not as positively received within the teams as less threatening forms of dissent. The issue of how different types of dissent were processed is explored more fully in Sections 5.5.2 and 5.5.3.

The frequency with which dissent was present in the team discussions is indicated at Figure 5.7, column 5 (entitled “Dsnt”). The difference between the teams on this property is summarised at Table 5.9. An important observation was that in three of the four teams, in at least half the instances where dissent was present, there was also disharmony of interest about decision outcomes. This is reflected in the data at column 6. These cases are highlighted for illustrative purposes in Figure 5.9, and this phenomenon is explored more fully later in the chapter.

A strong positive correlation (\(\text{rho}=0.61, p<0.01\)) was found between the presence of unresolved dissent and residual disharmony of interest about decisions. This finding indicated that where dissent was present during discussions, the teams by and large did not manage the discussion to a positive outcome. Table 5.9 indicates that Teams 3 and 4 clearly managed dissent less
effectively than others, with residual disharmony of interest present in 60% of decisions where member dissent was expressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Sharing</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Acc</th>
<th>Disc</th>
<th>Dsnt</th>
<th>Intrst</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Decision 1</strong></td>
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**TABLE 5.9**

**Dissenting Behaviour**

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<th>% of discussions where dissenting behaviour present</th>
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**Figure 5.7** Property: Dissenting Behaviour – Frequency of Presence

Management of dissent, therefore, emerged as an important issue affecting team process orientation in the study. In understanding the impact of dissent more clearly within these teams, a more detailed analysis was conducted of the way dissent was managed and processed, and the differences between team functioning when dissent was present and managed.
constructively, and when it was not. The issues of degree of peer support and leader support for dissent arose from the reflexive readings as being key considerations in this regard, and are now discussed.

### 5.5.2 Property of Team Climate: Peer Support for Dissent

The previous section identified that dissenting behaviour almost always occurred with the introduction of discordant new information to team discussions. During team observations and subsequent data analysis, it became apparent that the attitude of other team members to dissenters was a factor in whether dissenting views were fully voiced, and whether discordant information was fully taken into account in decision-making.

In the interests of understanding team reaction to dissent more fully, the data were coded and analysed to establish whether levels of member support for each other differed when they were in agreement, compared to when there was dissent involved. Interestingly, in most cases there was no particular difference apparent between peer relationships when dissent was present, compared to when it was not present. The researcher observed that, for the most part, there was a supportive stance from peers when dissenters proffered discordant points of view (the attitude of the team leader on this indicator is discussed at Section 5.5.3).

Literal and interpretive readings of the data indicated that peer support for dissenters took a number of forms across the four teams. The following are examples of behaviours which were observed to have a positive influence on encouraging dissenters to express a contra point of view:

- listening to the point being made in a neutral way, without interrupting
- acknowledging the validity/ importance of the point/ argument being made, such as, “I take your point though. The tricky thing is …” [data, Team 2]
- empathising with provider of dissenting view, such as, “Obviously we’re all a bit confused …” [data, Team 3]
- seeking to clarify what the new information meant, such as, “There’s a lot of things that are going across different areas … that’s why I was questioning …” [data, Team 2]
- exploring the implications of the new information, such as “… will there be increases in middle management … is this about bringing in another level of management?” [data, Team 2]

- posing questions arising from the new information in a neutral and inclusive way, such as, “Do we believe that 2 hours is a realistic time limit, as a maximum?” [data, Team 1]

- seeking to put the new information in context with other information, such as, “I guess you’ve got two options don’t you?” [data, Team 1]

- supportive verbal and non verbal cues whilst listening, such as “yep, yep”, accompanied by nodding of head

- proposing solutions to an impasse, such as “… and I think probably if we were able to get the information and just think about it, compare and come back …” [data, Team 2]

- reinforcing collective team responsibility, such as, “How would you like us to help you manage that?” [data, Team 3]

5.5.2.1 Lack of Peer Support

In the 40 observations of decision-making conducted across the four teams (ten each), there were only two instances identified from reflexive readings of the data where peer reaction was not conducive to the expression of dissent. In one instance, a team member expressed a view that a proposed course of action was only being agreed to in principle. The member was met with a raised voice response from a peer who was the sponsor of the item, “It’s not agreeing in principle (name)! The document is to implement (the program) in (the department). It’s a set of actions about how we do that. That’s what we’re committing to here (name).” [data, Team 1]

When no other team members (or for that matter the team leader) intervened in support of the dissenter, or to assist the team to process the dissenting view, the dissenter was observed to immediately withdraw and modify their position.

During a subsequent individual interview, the dissenting team member commented that, when met with a raised voice response, they were “resigned to the fact it had to be implemented”,...
commenting that in terms of process, “I guess in the end (the proposal) was being railroaded through the meeting” [data, team 1]. During the interview, it became clear the dissenter had underlying concerns (expressed to the researcher) about the proposal’s “over-engineering”, and some design aspects being “hollow process”. It appeared to the team members concerned that these issues were potentially important, and would have been of value if aired and resolved at the time of the team discussion. On face value, the researcher felt these views may have influenced the final team decision, had they been taken into account.

Furthermore, an interview conducted with a second team member present during the discussion revealed similar concerns on their part about the proposed initiative which had been discussed and agreed to by the team. The second team member commented, “You get, you know, cynical about some of the things and the way we go about it ... it just seemed to me to be very pushy.” The team member indicated that, had they been able to influence the decision more fully, they would have argued in the interest of impact on staff, “to soften the approach a little.” [data, Team 1]

When interviewed, the sponsor of the item who had rebuked the dissenting team member provided some background context to their actions, indicating this issue had been on-going, and tension had been developing for some time. They commented:

“… there are particular individuals ... you can predict to take a negative stance, so you kind of expect when you put something on the table, you’ll get that from particular people. However in that instance, we had been discussing the (initiative) for some time, and I would have expected by then all of the managers around the table would have understood the (process) framework was something we had agreed to adopt, had gone around all the reasons why we would do that, and it was a sensible way forward, and no particular resistance. So in some ways it can be a little surprising that you get that, you get that push back all of a sudden … Probably annoyed I think is the best word to use ...” [data, Team 1]

There was also an instance observed in another team, where a member’s dissenting view was met with a less than supportive response from peers. The reaction of the dissenter to a lack of support was to implore in a quite emotional way, “Why do I always have to be the one to be defeated? Why have a discussion when it’s all one way?” [data, Team 3]

During a subsequent confidential interview, a team member who had not supported the dissenter explained, “… and if I see a proposal there that I think is ridiculous, just because it
comes from (name) that’s not why I’m knocking it, I’m knocking it because I think it’s ridiculous ...” [data, Team 3]

There was an indication in the interpretive readings of the data that these two incidents may have had unusual circumstances. In the first case, the non-supportive peer was the sponsor of an item, and had experienced what they regarded as inappropriate resistance to the proposal from the dissenter on previous occasions. Nevertheless, the data analysis suggested some team members considered the particular proposal was being forced on them, and had some genuine concerns about it, which they felt had not been resolved.

In the second instance, there was a recurring indication in individual interviews conducted with other team members that the individual concerned was seen to be something of a serial dissenter, and this may have reduced this member’s ability more generally to influence opinion within the group during decision-making.

In view of there being at least some degree of extenuating factors involved, these two instances were not seen to detract from the conclusion that in at least three of the teams there was a receptive atmosphere from peers towards dissent by other members.

Figure 5.8 provides a picture of peer support for dissent within the teams. This is reflected in column 6 (entitled “PSpt”), which reflects the lack of support evident in the two situations referred to. These cases are shaded in blue to highlight them. A comparison is made between the teams on this indicator in Table 5.10.

An interesting difference between the teams was that in Team 1, there was a much lower incidence of dissent than in the other teams, yet a much higher incidence of lack of peer support when dissent did occur. This phenomenon was noted to be potentially of interest, because of the inference there may have been particular dynamics at play within Team 1 which fostered consensus and/ or militated against dissent. In view of the differences in levels of dissent noted within the teams, there was an indication that there may have been important
differences between the teams in the way team leaders fostered and managed dissent behaviour. The issue of team leader support for dissent is now explored.

TABLE 5.10
Lack of Peer Support for Dissent

| % of cases where dissenters not supported by peers |
|-----------------|---|
| Team 1          | 50% |
| Team 2          | 0  |
| Team 3          | 15 |
| Team 4          | 0  |

Legend:
- ◼ relationships highlighted for discussion
- ■ disharmony of interest present
- ♦ lack of peer support for dissent
- ● dissent behaviour present
- • discordant new information present
- * accordant new information present
- ○ base level information present

Figure 5.8 Property: Lack of Peer Support for Dissent – Frequency of Presence

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5.5.3 Property of Team Climate: Leader Support for Dissent

Researchers in the area of leadership style have established that leaders strongly influence workplace climate. Much of the research about transformational leadership for instance emphasises the inclusive effect of leaders promoting a climate of intellectual stimulation, where followers are able to engage with issues at an individual level (Bass, 1985). The research in transformational and transactional leadership styles (Bass, 1995) suggests a team leader has a key influence in creating - or not creating - the settings in which dissent is likely to be expressed. Associated with free expression of dissent within teams is a leadership style which is based on valuing dialectic enquiry. Under this style of leadership, discordant new information and dissenting views are able to be processed in a way which adds value to team decisions and relationships (Bass, 1985). The extant research further suggests that this type of leadership behaviour within teams also foster the type of independent thinking and active engagement associated with exemplary followership (Kelley, 1988).

During the team observations undertaken in the current research program, the influence of team leaders was seen to be an important factor in whether member dissent was processed in a way which resulted in members reaching harmony of interest in decision outcomes.

Interpretive readings of data indicated that particular leader behaviours during team discussions directly fostered a climate where dissent could be processed constructively within the teams. Examples of these behaviours identified from the qualitative coding formats were:

- endorsing the importance of all points made, such as, “Alright if we can capture those, I think ...” [data, Team 1]

- answering dissenting members questions in a neutral and positive way, such as, “A product or service at the moment is one that’s defined as …” [data, Team 2]

- drawing other members points of view into the discussion around the dissenter’s point in a neutral way, such as, “What about you (name), how do you find it from
the (discipline) side of things? When students call up, I mean does it …” [data, Team 2]

- endorsing concerns expressed by members, such as, “But I do agree often (meetings) can be too much talking at …” [data, Team 3]

- pointing to a way forward, such as “… and rather than change all of (the division) at the one time we could provide a leading example of a model …” [data, Team 2]

- summarising by incorporating all views, such as, “So pulling it together, I guess what I’m hearing people saying is …” [data, Team 1]

5.5.3.1 Lack of Leader Support by Commission

At the same time, the interpretive readings indicated there were team leader behaviours which had the effect of stifling dissent, and thereby limiting discussion. Where leaders exhibited these behaviours, their verbal cues were seen to pre-empt outcomes in some cases, and in other cases to inhibit debate by blocking the expression of views. Moreover, subsequent interviews conducted with dissenters confirmed that the leader behaviours cited had a negative effect. The following are examples where the researcher concluded that team leader verbal cues had the effect of inhibiting dissent:

“That may well be the case, but we have to work through the machinations …” [data, Team 2]

“There’s a lot of stuff in (your bid) that I don’t think really fits. Now I could run down them …” [data, Team 3]

“Yes, but it’s peanuts. We’re talking big projects, not $200 bids …” [data, Team 3]

“Well I can ask them, but I just imagined that …” [data, Team 3]

“How about all the other questions? They all look pretty straight forward to me.” [data, Team 4]
Dyadic Decision-Making:  A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour

(annoyed tone) “I’m confused (dissenter’s name), so what do you want us to do?” [data, Team 4]

“One of the problems I have here is it’s just not going to see - it’s a dead service walking ...” [data, Team 4]

“I reckon it’s dead ...” [data, Team 4]

These quotations are examples of team leader responses to dissenting behaviour, which were not conducive to effective team discussion and decision-making processes. One case in point is set out in detail at Figure 5.9. This example illustrates the sequence of dissenter comments and team leader responses, and the effect the team leader had of inhibiting the discussion process. In this case, a commitment was given to follow up the concerns expressed by the dissenter at a future meeting, but notwithstanding this commitment, during the subsequent six meetings of the team, the issue was not revisited.

During a subsequent interview conducted with the dissenting staff member to develop reflexive readings of the data, the dissenter confirmed they thought their issue hadn’t been resolved. The dissenter commented, “The fact that the other issue that I raised has not been captured, we’ll probably do that after discussion with (the leader). He and I have a point where I can raise the matter with him, and I can say ‘well look …’ ” [data, Team 4]

5.5.3.2 Lack of Leader Support by Omission

The interpretive readings of the coding formats indicated that as well as team leader actions which discouraged dissent, there were also situations where team leaders discouraged dissent through their inaction, for example by not intervening when other team members were behaving inappropriately towards dissenters.

One example of this was where a team member was allowed to terminate discussion by responding to a dissenting team member in a raised voice and aggressive manner, and the team leader failed to intervene to allow the discussion to continue (the circumstances of this case have been outlined in detail as an example referred to in Section 5.5.2). In another instance
The discussion concerned a proposed staff survey instrument to gauge the level of satisfaction with internal service provision by the department. At one point in the discussion a team member raised a concern that the instrument didn’t test the issue of relations with other departments which were in the same division as this department. The dissenter introduced their concerns with:

Dissenter: “It’s a very outward facing survey and I’ve been giving some thought to how we actually measure and encourage cooperation between groups ... What I’m trying to get at is where it is a service to some external client, it quite often requires the efforts of several different groups, and that’s where we tend to get friction between the different groups because what may be urgent for you may not be urgent for someone else …”

There was then some discussion within the team about whether the survey instrument as it was could in fact also do what the dissenter was suggesting. The dissenter continued to express their concerns:

Dissenter: “If you think of your group as clients within (the division), then how they are feeling about your services is something that is not being picked up particularly well by this and is not being picked up particularly well by KPI’s and I’m wondering where it’s being picked up and how we’re actually driving that service delivery across groups ...”

Leader: “What are you suggesting?”

Dissenter: “Arr, we could aggressively solicit responses from groups within (the division). To make sure this goes out to everyone in (the division) with ‘this is how you can give feedback on other groups, your colleagues’. That would be one way to turn this into a tool to look at how we are working across those inter group boundaries.”

In further discussion about using this instrument to ascertain the information, the dissenter pointed out that the questions were too broad to identify the department’s services specifically. The dissenter then expressed their concerns more bluntly, to which the leader responded in a way which effectively terminated the discussion. The interchange was as follows:

Dissenter: “What I’m getting at is if everything was ok, and we had a good culture then we wouldn’t have problems with silos or friction between groups. Now there is anecdotal evidence that we do have those problems.”

Leader: “This is not the instrument. This is not the instrument. Let’s focus on the instrument.”

Dissenter: “Well, what is the instrument?”

Leader: “That’s another matter, so ... let’s finalise these instruments. And then we can move on to your problem. Because this isn’t the vehicle to hit that problem I don’t think.”

At the end of the discussion, the following discussion took place about follow up:

Leader: “Ah sorry, (name) raised an important point before – not wanting to dismiss that (name) – in the focus on solving those – can we add that to the list – the issue of somehow or other – what’s the point? – looking at ...”

Dissenter: “The working relationship …”

Leader: “The working relationship within (the department) ... another agenda item for the Management Team is the relationships across service groups – a qualitative survey”

Figure 5.9 Detailed Example: Management of Dissent by Team Leader [data, Team 4]
involving a different team, a team member sponsoring an item encountered strong resistance and criticism of their proposal during a team discussion. Some of the criticism could have been taken to reflect on the competency of the sponsor of the proposal. This is the sequence of discussion which took place:

Member 1  “But hang on, if you were the customer right, and you bought your hundred gigs in 2005 – you paid it up front – now this includes maintenance and support …”

Sponsor  “That’s ok, it’s just if I ran my own business …”

Member 1  “You’d go broke.” [data, Team 4]

The team leader did not intervene to return the discussion to an objective footing, and the sponsor of the item reflected their frustration to the team at the conclusion of the discussion:

“So what more do you want me to do with this? I’m about to give up on this. What else? Because the thing is, really the direction you’ve given me, you want to put (costs) into the (model) or that, because I’m almost at the end point. So I’ve got one major client saying he’s happy and one he’s not happy, and I don’t know what to do.” [data, Team 4]

In an interview with a team member who had taken part in the critique of the proposal, it was acknowledged that the criticism of the sponsor of the item had been severe. This member commented, “We beat (the sponsor) to death on a few occasions on that, and quite frankly on a couple of occasions (the sponsor) deserved to be beaten to death.” [data, Team 4]

In a subsequent interview conducted with the sponsor of the item, their disenchantment about the way the leader managed the discussion was made clear. The sponsor commented,

“I think it’s unsound, and this is where I get really annoyed, because (the leader) knows and other members of the team as well and (the critic) knows himself that yes, he can go and buy cheap disks out there in the store but at the end of the day there’s no reliability of these units. You can’t just put them in your computer, they have to sit on the desk. They could fall over, you can’t expand it, and they could easily get stolen … but just there I don’t think (the leader) gave me the support that I needed. And I think just because (the leader) doesn’t give the support, other members are allowed to dictate what they want.” [data, Team 4]

It became apparent from the reflexive readings taken over progressive iterations of team observations, that team leaders were able to systemically exert considerable influence over the manner in which dissent was managed and processed within the team setting. The reflexive readings indicated that leader dissent-blocking behaviours took the form of both commission
and omission. Some particularly negative leader behaviours emerged from the reflexive readings of data, and these behaviours were aggregated under the following categories:

- leader actively discouraged dissent on an issue through their own responses/actions
- leader passively discouraged dissent through not intervening when other team members were discouraging dissent
- leader not allowing sufficient discussion time for dissenting views to be processes through discussion and negotiation

For the purpose of understanding the effect of this behaviour in grounded theory terms, it was concluded through interpretive data readings that these behaviours, while different in nature, had a similar net effect in discouraging dissent behaviour.

Figure 5.10, Column 7 (entitled “LSpt”) provides an indication of the extent to which team leader support for dissent was considered to be present, and not present, during the team discussions. A comparison between the groups on this indicator is set out at Table 5.12. Situations where lack of leaders support for dissent occurred with disharmony of interest are highlighted in blue for further discussion.

A strong positive correlation ($\rho=1.00, p<.01$) was found between lack of leader support for dissent and residual disharmony of interest in decision outcomes. Notwithstanding the perfect correlation, these were determined to be separate phenomena as the former was measured during discussions, and the latter at the conclusion of discussions. The observations and subsequent interviews with dissenters supported the finding. Dissenters indicate the net effect of team leaders discouraging dissent was to leave dissenters feeling un-supported in their right to have, and express a different point of view. The dissenters concerned indicated that as a result of this, they had felt negatively about the decision-making process.
**Chapter 5: Team Process Orientation**

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**Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour**

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**TABLE 5.11**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Lack of Leader Support for Dissent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>75</td>
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**5.5.4 Lower Order Category: Team Climate – Conclusion**

The observations of the four teams and the associated individual interviews established that team climate was an important factor. Team climate influenced firstly whether dissent arose during discussions, and secondly whether dissent was able to be processed in a positive way which added value to, and created cohesion around decision outcomes. The importance of
encouraging and constructively processing dissent for effective decision-making processes in teams is well established in the extant research (Baron, Kerr & Miller, 1993; De Dreu & West, 2001).

The research study conducted around the decision-making processes of these four teams indicated that dissent was likely to be processed constructively and positively where there was leader and peer support for dissenters. The statistically strong correlation between lack of team leader support for dissent and disharmony of interest in decision outcomes testifies to the key role played by team leaders in creating the appropriate climate for constructive dissent management. There is a substantial body of research about the importance of dissent as a safeguard against process loss in teams (Janis, 1972).

The current research indicated that team leader attitude towards dissenters had a more powerful influence over constructive management of dissent than peer member attitude towards dissenters. In the majority of cases in this study, peers supported the rights of team members to dissent, and where they didn’t, it was clearly within the power of team leaders to address this through intervening in group processes.

By contrast, in every case across the four teams where team leader support for dissent was not in evidence, the outcome was a situation where the dissenter had been left unsatisfied with the process. This resulted in there being residual disharmony of interest among team members around decision outcomes.

The reflexive readings across the data from the four teams, taken over progressive iterations of observation and interview, concluded that lack of team leader support usually took an active form, where the team leader stifled discussion through their own actions/words. Alternatively, it could also take a passive form, where the team leader either failed to intervene when members didn’t support dissent behaviour, or the leader terminated discussions before dissent could be processed to a constructive conclusion.
In the current research program, peer support for dissent was important, but appeared to be virtually a given in the study teams. There appeared to be a very good level of camaraderie in all four teams, which was confirmed during confidential interviews. Members consistently indicated they liked being part of their teams, often citing the opportunity to interact with their peers as one of the most satisfying aspects. Indeed, this was confirmed by the fact that lack of peer support for dissent was only present in 12% of cases where dissent was present, and this represented only two cases, which occurred in different teams.

In conclusion, this study found that the net effect of unresolved dissent was residual disharmony of interest between team members around decision outcomes. Moreover, a strong qualitative relationship was found between lack of leader support for dissent, and residual disharmony of interest among members. Because of the potential implications disharmony of interest had for teams reaching consensual commitment around decisions, the issue of member interest in decision outcomes was explored. This is now discussed.
5.6 LOWER ORDER CATEGORY: INTEREST IN OUTCOME

The question of member interest in decision outcomes has been the subject of considerable attention in the extant literature. Researchers such as Dooley and Fryxell (1999), Schweiger and Sandberg (1991), and Amason (1996) propose that if decision-making teams are to be effective, they must aim for consensual commitment on every decision.

The extant research in this area suggests that teams should put a high emphasis in their decision-making processes on working through dissent to reach a situation where the dissenter feels satisfied that their views have been properly heard and considered by the team. The literature suggests that to be satisfied with team processes, dissenters don’t - for the most part – necessarily expect that final decisions will be in accordance with their wishes (Folger, 1977). However, they do need to feel that their contribution has been valued, treated seriously, and taken into account in the final decision outcome. A further consideration is that the dissenter must feel there are no ramifications for their having spoken against the prevailing view within the team (Jehn, 1995). The extant literature, therefore, indicated that if dissenters in the current research program had been satisfied with group processes, there was likely to be harmony of interest among team members about decision outcomes.

In the current research, the progressive iterations of observation and interview, and the associated reflexive reading of data, indicated that the issue of team climate was an important consideration in all team discussions. It was clear, however, that climate was more important as an issue when teams were facing dissent behaviour. The individual interviews conducted with dissenters indicated that, where they felt their dissenting views had not been dealt with appropriately, they were left with concerns about whether the correct decision had been made.
This impacted on the level of consensual commitment among team members about decisions. In some cases, this also raised an issue of longer term concern, where some team members had a sense they were becoming isolated within their teams, through being seen as regular dissenters.

As a phenomenon, member interest in the outcome of decisions was found to be complex, and the reflexive readings indicated it had three important properties. The properties of the lower order category of *member interest in outcome* are set out in Table 5.12, and are now explored in more detail.

### TABLE 5.12
**Lower Order Category of Interest in Outcome – Properties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony of Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disharmony of Interest</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.6.1 Property of Interest in Outcome: Shared Interest

Literal and interpretive readings of the data in this study indicated that on many decision issues, there was a shared interest on the part of team members in the outcome.

The qualitative coding formats indicated that shared interest was illustrated by member behaviours which reflected agreement about outcomes. Furthermore, it was not unusual for members to have or to reach a shared interest, despite the fact they approached decisions from different perspectives, and with different imperatives in mind. Axial coding which was used to link concepts indicated that where there was shared interest, new information provided during discussions tended to be in accord with the direction the discussion was taking. An example of this type of situation is set out below. This was a discussion between four team members about a proposed joint meeting with another senior team. The previous joint meeting had not been very successful. In this discussion, all members were clearly of a like mind in terms of the objectives and anticipated outcomes of the proposed second meeting:
“... what we were looking for is an emphasis on the topics that are of joint interest to both groups rather than just simply merging the two agendas together ...”

“Similar thoughts here. Speaking to (name) afterward we both agreed that we should have a fully fledged agenda ...”

“Because of the attempt at two routine agendas it went way overtime. I mean a whole slab of the joint agenda that didn’t get to the last 40 minutes was lost, and there was some general business, you know, general discussion things at that time.”

“We should raise in the (management) meeting prior to that combined meeting - we rehearse our input maybe. So that when it comes to forming the agenda next time, it’s not such a difficult task. I think we can pre-empt maybe.”

“Well there was preparation in a sense of those 4 main topics ...”

“Just do that rehearsal again.”

“Yeah yeah” (all) [data, Team 1]

Other non-verbal cues by team members often suggested the presence of shared interest in the outcome of a decision. These were similar in nature to the non-verbal cues identified in Section 5.5.2 in the discussion about peer support behaviour.

### 5.6.2 Property of Interest in Outcome: Harmony of Interest

It was unrealistic to presume that every decision item would be of equal interest to every team member. In the current research program, a situation which often emerged from the reflexive data readings was one where some members clearly had less of an interest in the outcome of a decision than other members. In these cases, the main consideration of less directly interested members appeared to be whether the outcome did not have unfavourable implications for their areas. The interpretive readings suggest these members would typically not actively take part in a discussion, but would maintain an interest in the direction the discussion was taking, interjecting from time to time to clarify the implications of what was being considered. When it occurred during team discussions, this situation was identified as being more like harmony of interest than shared interest.

An example of this type of occurrence which was identified in the data is now provided, and involved a discussion around a proposal by a team leader to review the list and description of
products and services provided by the department. In the course of the discussion, a team member who had less of a direct interest in the matter under discussion interjected with, “... can I just ask, is there any sense that OK we’re going to decide on these 10 new lines instead of 38, or whatever it might be – whatever the number might be – will there be increases in middle management too. Is this about bringing in another level of management?”

When the team leader responded with, “No it’s not. This is about products … it’s not about structure, it’s about products” [data, Team 2], the team member’s concerns appeared to have been allayed.

Harmony of interest was therefore an important consideration in members reaching agreement about decisions, and from a practical point of view – given the different underlying organizational roles of team members – was often a more realistic outcome for teams than shared interest.

5.6.3 Property of Interest in Outcome: Disharmony of Interest

As indicated in Section 5.5 where the lower order category of team climate was explored, disharmony of interest emerged in the reflexive readings of data. These were situations where members had different interests in a decision outcome, and these differences were not able to be resolved through team processes for managing dissent. Examples of dissenting behaviour of this type were outlined in detail and discussed in Section 5.5, where specific cases were cited from the data.

The coding formats and associated readings, taken at a higher level of abstraction, indicated that disharmony of interest could be present at the beginning of discussions, during discussions, and at the conclusion of discussions. The reflexive readings indicated that dissent occurring prior to, and during discussions was often converted to harmony of interest when team climate factors were conducive to constructive resolution of conflicting views. Moreover, the readings suggested the presence of such disharmony of interest could in fact add value to team processes and decision quality, where it stimulated a more detailed
exploration of decision options. For example, in one case it led to a team abandoning a significant new initiative altogether, after discordant new information provided by a dissenter proved the proposal to be fundamentally flawed conceptually. This finding in the current research program is consistent with the research about the positive effects of constructively managed dissent in teams (Peterson, 1997; Nemeth & Chiles, 1988).

However, the current research indicated that the consequences of unresolved dissent at the conclusion of discussions resulted in dissenters harbouring residual concerns about both team processes, and resultant decisions. Moreover, this was seen to manifest as residual disharmony of interest among members about decision outcomes. Where disharmony of interest was present at the conclusion of discussions it had a negative effect on team dynamics, whereas disharmony of interest prior to and during discussions could often have a positive influence.

Furthermore, the data suggested that repeated failure to resolve dissent could have an on-going impact on broader team cohesion and climate. One example of this was a discussion which occurred about implementing a new quality assurance system, an item sponsored by a team member with responsibility in that area. The discussion occurred as follows:

(sponsor)  “I’m assuming from the lack of any feedback today that everyone’s happy with what was there.”

dissenter) “Well basically we all agree in principle to it. And when the project manager comes on board it’ll be a case of practice.”

(sponsor) (raised voice) “It’s not agreeing in principle (name). The document is to implement (quality program) in (Department). It’s a set of actions about how we do that. That’s what we’re committing to here (name).”

dissenter) “… I mean it is a tool to make our work place better but just a little bit of caution about getting over-process with it and missing the objective. This was an issue in the past (name) if you recall with what was it called (name) …” [data, Team 1]

During a subsequent individual interview the dissenting team member commented on the process and its conclusion, indicating that they were clearly not convinced of the merits of the
proposed initiative, at least in its presented format, proposing that at least one other team member shared the same view. The member in question commented:

“The need for it to be so rigorously applied is an issue, without adequate assessment of its full value and applicability. I had a discussion with (another team member) the other day since the meeting and the word ‘over-engineered’ came up, and we agreed. Must be our engineering background. I agree with the intent and nobility of the cause, not as committed to the formality.” [data, Team 1]

In a subsequent interview, the second team member identified commented along similar lines:

“ My view is possibly less about (the initiative) and more about how, because I think as a concept it’s fine … however I guess it’s sort of harks back to when (a past initiative) was the flavour of the month in the nineties, and you know everyone was waving the flag and lots of activity, but you know it seemed somewhat out of prescriptive and ... more to say you know we can tick the box and say we’ve done it, as opposed to really embedding it into processes and practices and the culture. That was my, and it is my concern with (the initiative) ...” [data, Team 1]

In another case, a team member commented as they left the meeting room at the end of a discussion in an apparently distressed manner, “Why do I always have to be the one to be defeated? Why have a discussion when it’s all one way?” [data, Team 3]. This particular dissenter’s unhappiness with the decision process was confirmed in a subsequent interview, where they also suggested this was often the outcome when they expressed dissent. The team member commented, “Well my issues don’t get up there because they’re far too small ... and I’m always wanting process to be followed, you know because that’s what I stick to, and then I get cranky if it’s not happening ...” [data, Team 3]

As outlined in Section 5.5, because of the potential sensitivity of any conclusions drawn by the researcher about residual disharmony of interest, confidential interviews were conducted with dissenters to ascertain first hand - in their own words - their feelings about team processes and outcomes in these cases. The resultant data for the most part triangulated positively with the data from team observations, confirming that unresolved dissent did lead to disharmony of interest in decision outcomes. A strong positive correlation ($\rho = .61$, $p < .01$) was found between unresolved dissent and disharmony of interest.

There was also a consistent qualitative indication that where team members were left unhappy about the way their dissenting views were managed, they also had concerns about decision
outcomes. This, in turn, raised questions about whether these members were committed to implementing the decisions in a whole-hearted way. The cases previously cited in this section are good examples. By extension, this dynamic also raised a question about the level of consensual commitment the teams reached around these decision items. This had implications for whether teams were oriented overall towards effective team processes within the definition adopted for the study.

5.6.4 Lower Order Category: Interest in Outcome - Conclusion

As discussed in Section 5.3.2, the performance of the teams in the study in achieving consensual commitment was inconsistent. Two teams failed to establish consensual commitment in 10% of decisions, and two teams failed in 30% of their decisions.

Figure 5.11 provides an illustration of the relationship between member interest in the outcome of a decision, and whether consensual commitment was apparent around the actual decision outcome. The basis for reaching a conclusion about teams having achieved, or not achieved consensual commitment was explained in Section 5.3, and was referred to in the previous section, which deals with management of dissent behaviour. Column 9 of Figure 5.11 (entitled “CC”) reflects the outcome for each team decision, in terms of whether consensual commitment was present. The findings are summarised at Table 5.13.
Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour

### TABLE 5.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team 1</th>
<th>Decision 1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>Team 2</td>
<td>Decision 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>Decision 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
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</table>

**Legend:**
- relationship highlighted for discussion
- lack of consensual commitment
- disharmony of interest
- lack of leader support for dissent
- lack of peer support for dissent
- dissent behaviour present
- discordant new information present
- accordant new information present
- base level information present

Figure 5.11 Properties: Disharmony of Interest and Lack of Consensual Commitment

For comparison purposes, decision items have been highlighted for further discussion in cases where there were both disharmony of interest among members (column 8), and lack of consensual commitment about decision outcomes (column 9).

The reflexive data indicated that situations of disharmony of interest and lack of consensus/commitment invariably occurred together, with a strong positive correlation (\(\rho = 1.00, p < .01\)). This means that in this study, where residual disharmony of interest was present at the conclusion of a discussion, lack of consensual commitment was always present also.
Notwithstanding the perfect correlation, these were determined to be two distinct phenomena because the former related to the inability to achieve a utilitarian outcome during the decision process, and the latter to the team member’s reaction to that outcome.

5.7 HIGHER ORDER CATEGORY: TEAM PROCESS ORIENTATION - CONCLUSION

Through the data collection and analysis procedures used in the current research program, three important lower order categories were identified for the higher order category of *team process orientation*. These were:

- information sharing
- team climate
- interest in outcome

Teams were regarded as having a disposition towards effective decision-making processes when they met the definition of effectiveness proposed by Dooley and Fryxell (1999), namely that they reached member consensual commitment to decision outcomes. An important finding in the current research program was the strong positive correlation between ineffective resolution of dissent during team discussions, and residual disharmony of interest among members about decision outcomes.

The implications of this dynamic were quite important in terms of defining team process orientation, as there was also a strong positive correlation between such residual disharmony of interest, and lack of member consensual commitment towards decision outcomes.

The second important finding was the strong positive correlation between team leader support for dissent, and team members reaching harmony of interest about decision outcomes. This
finding indicated that it was the attitude and approach of the team leader to management of dissent which was the key factor in the teams having positive processes for constructive problem solving, incorporating effective consideration of all views and options. This relationship is captured in the data at Table 5.11.

These findings had particular implications from a grounded theory development point of view. Firstly, to have effective process orientation, the teams required internal processes for positively managing dissent behaviour to achieve harmony of interest around decision outcomes and, in turn, consensual commitment to them. Secondly, the teams required appropriate behaviour by the team leader to create an atmosphere where dissent was encouraged, and could be managed constructively.

The central importance of avoiding disharmony of interest is supported in the extant literature, where for example Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) and Wiersema and Bantel (1992) found that lack of agreement in teams about underlying goals created political activity which restricted information flow during group processes, and often diminished group performance. Consensual commitment is well supported with the literature as being essential to effective team processes (Dooley & Fryxell, 1999; Amason, 1996).

Three important qualitative relationships were found in the data analysis relating to team process orientation. These were supported by the non-parametric data analysis, and are summarise as:

- a strong relationship \( (\rho=1.00, p<.01) \) between lack of leader support for dissent, and unresolved dissent
- a strong relationship \( (\rho=.61, p<.01) \) between unresolved dissent, and residual disharmony of interest about decisions
- a strong relationship \( (\rho=1.00, p<.01) \) between residual disharmony of interest about decisions, and lack of consensus/commitment to decisions
The data analysis indicated that, while not the sole indicator, member dissent during discussions was invariably an indicator of the presence of, or potential for residual disharmony of interest at the conclusion of discussions. Significantly, this research study found that in these teams, leader attitude towards dissent had a profound effect on whether dissent was positively processed, and residual disharmony of interest thereby avoided.

### 5.7.1 Importance of Team Leader Behaviour

While team leaders were seen to foster a positive team climate for management of dissent in 50% of cases where dissent was present, the data at Table 5.13 indicated that in every case where leaders did not provide a positive climate for dissent, residual disharmony of interest was apparent. While the inference that team leaders sometimes did and sometimes didn’t create a positive team climate for dissent appeared contradictory at first glance, this research study indicated that team leader omission as well as commission influenced team climate around dissent. This meant that team leaders may have unwittingly been discouraging dissent through their failure to intervene during inappropriate behaviour by others in the team. Moreover, there was also an indicator that personal factors relating to individuals sometimes influenced whether all dissenters were treated in the same way.

A direct positive linear relationship was found in the current research program between the lower order categories of team climate and interest in outcome, insofar as leaders failing to create the appropriate climate for dissent to be processed positively had a direct and positive correlation with disharmony of interest about decision outcomes. Information sharing was also identified as a lower order category in this study. However its role was seen to be that of an enabler, rather than a facilitator of team process effectiveness, compared to the role played by the lower order categories of team climate and interest in outcome.

Finally, the data at Figure 5.11 indicated that one team of the four performed markedly better than the others (by a factor of 3) in constructively processing dissent into harmony of interest around decision outcomes. Importantly, this team also ranked higher than the others in terms of leader support for dissent, by a factor of 2.5. This phenomenon is explored in more detail.
in Chapter 6, which examines team leader and team member orientation in decision-making in more detail.

The findings of the current research program are consistent with the proposition by Edmondson et al. (2003) that team dynamics is a factor in resolving any underlying “asymmetry” which exists in either the information available to members, or their interest in the outcome of decisions. Edmondson and his colleagues propose that a sense of psychological safety as part of the team is important for dissenters to be prepared to voice their concerns and input new information. Edmondson et al. (2003) propose that for effective resolution of different points of view and conflicting information, there needs to be an even-ness in the sharing of power within the team, which will permit due process to unfold.

In the particular decision-making situations examined in the current research program, there was strong support for concluding that the team leader had an important role in setting a team climate which was conducive to resolving divergent points of view. An important aspect of this climate setting involved making dissenters feel they had permission to dissent, and that it was safe to do so.

Another important consistency between the findings of the current research program and the theory proposed by Edmondson and his colleagues was that the interplay of factors in decision-making was situation specific. In three of the teams, team climate was markedly different where the teams were dealing with dissent behaviour. The exception was Team 2, where there appeared to have been a much more consistent climate within the team in relation to all decisions.

This raised a question as to whether - notwithstanding that decision-making behaviour was situation specific - there were more underlying factors about these teams which led to one having a stronger pre-disposition towards positive team climate than the other three. In this chapter, the behaviour of the study teams was examined in terms of their process cohesiveness as a unit. The next chapter examines the outcome orientation of the teams, and provides insights into the teams as groups of individuals.
Chapter 6: Team Outcome Orientation

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour
CHAPTER 6

TEAM OUTCOME ORIENTATION:
A HIGHER ORDER CATEGORY OF TOP LEVEL TEAM BEHAVIOUR

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In qualitative research, a higher order category typically emerges as part of an iterative data collection process. Typically, a higher order category is one within which a number of lower order emergent categories and their relationships can be grouped in a conceptual way, to facilitate understanding of the phenomena present in the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

One of two higher order categories arising from this research study was team outcome orientation. This chapter focuses on this higher order category. In all of the observations and interviews conducted, there was a recurring theme in the story line that in the decision-making process, individuals within the study teams behaved differently from each other – leaders from non-leaders, and peers from each other. This is not surprising given the level of gender, age and ethnic diversity within the teams studied.

The extant research indicates that diversity of membership should be encouraged within teams because of the value this adds to decision-making. In particular, diversity reduces the cognitive bias which occurs when decisions are made by one person (Feeseer & Willard, 1990). However, the extant research suggests that balancing the different perspectives arising from membership diversity is one of the major challenges for teams during team decision-making (Michie, Dooley and Fryxell, 2002). The extant research suggests, therefore, that the way different member perspectives are managed and balanced is likely to influence the outcome orientation of a decision-making team.
The previous chapter discussed team process orientation as an important higher order category in top level team decision-making behaviour, and was essentially concerned with how the teams in the study functioned as single cohesive units. In a sense, thinking of a team as a single unit was somewhat paradoxical, if the argument is accepted that decision-making is conducted through a team to add value, by having diversity of individual perspectives. The present research study took a pluralist view of teams, namely that team members (including the leader) had different motivations to be part of the team, and therefore had different factors which influenced their input to decisions. Consistent with this pluralist view, it followed that the differences in member motivations – considered individually and collectively – were likely to influence the type of outcome orientation for each team. There is broad support in the literature for this proposition, not least in the research on heterogeneity in teams, by authors such as Galbraith (1973) and Ashby (1956).

The examination of team outcome orientation undertaken in the current research program indicated that the orientation of team members in decision-making was, indeed, pluralist in nature. Moreover, this pluralism was found to establish an underlying dynamic within the study teams which affected inter alia their orientation as a team in terms of decision outcomes. The examination of team process orientation conducted in Chapter 5 was based on a definition of effectiveness as comprising member consensual commitment around decisions. This chapter looks more deeply at the issue of effectiveness, and examines it from an outcome perspective, seeking to understand the influence of individual and aggregate team member perspectives on the overall outcome orientation of the teams in the study.

There was an indication from the current research program that both the decision orientation of the team leader, as well as individual team members, influenced the patterns of team decision-making from an outcome point of view. Moreover, this research identified a number of key lower-order categories of team outcome orientation, as well as important interplay which occurred between these categories.

In other words, one of the higher order categories which emerged in this research study about top level team decision-making effectiveness was that of team outcome orientation. The
higher order category of team outcome orientation is represented in Figure 6.1, which depicts the framework of categories which emerged from the current research program. It is from this framework that the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making discussed in Chapter 9 is drawn. All categories were generated by the grounded theory methodology outlined in Part 2.

Discussion about the nature of this higher order category centres on the conceptual sub-categories of leader decision orientation; member decision orientation; and situational limiting factors. In this chapter, each of these sub-categories and their properties is discussed in turn, preceded by an exploration of the nature of team process effectiveness.

Discussion of each category is supported throughout by summaries of data which arose from the theoretical coding which was applied. Data analysis at progressively higher level of abstraction is incorporated within the discussion, to facilitate an understanding of how concepts emerged, and how their relationships were identified (Glaser, 1978; Swanson, 1986).

Throughout this chapter, the iterative nature of grounded theory development is illustrated by the progressive build-up in diagrammatic form of relationships between phenomena which emerged over progressive iterations of observation and analysis. This progressive theory development is reflected in Figures 6.3 through 6.7, and in effect represents the story line which evolved from the data analysis.

The chapter begins with an outline of key place markers in the research about team outcome orientation; then provides an exploration of this concept as it relates to the current research question. A discussion then follows about categories of findings, including relationships between concepts. The chapter concludes with an outline of key conclusions about team decision orientation as indicated by the current research program, and establishes a link to the discussion of near-core categories, and a basic social process of Dyadic Decision-Making, which occurs in Chapters 7 and 8.
Figure 6.1 Higher Order Category of Team Outcome Orientation
6.2 TEAM OUTCOME ORIENTATION – EXTANT RESEARCH

Two important reference points were identified in the research concerning team outcome orientation. The first of these provides some insight in understanding team leader orientation during decision-making; the second in understanding team member orientation during decision-making.

Chapter 5, which examined team process effectiveness issues, identified *inter alia* the influence team leaders had on the overall climate and dynamics within the study teams, through their approach as leaders to managing information and dissent.

6.2.1 Team Leader Outcome Orientation

One of the contemporary idioms of leadership style which has currency in the research is that of transformational and transactional leadership.

The notion of a transformational leadership style is probably best known through the research of Burns (2003). Transformational leadership refers to an approach by leaders which inspires followers to go beyond their natural abilities, through placing a high emphasis on engagement between the leader and follower. Bass (1985) identified transformational leadership as having four components, namely:

- *idealised influence*; a type of personal charisma
- *inspirational motivation*; involving articulation of a compelling vision
- *intellectual stimulation*; fostering creativity by challenging the *status quo*
- *individual consideration*; attending to the needs of individual followers

Central to the transformational leadership style concept is Burns’ (2003: 462) view that through an emphasis on values and moral purpose by leaders, “people can be lifted into their better selves”.

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.
Transactional leadership, by contrast, regards the follower “self” and potential in more limited terms than in transformational leadership. Transactional leadership style is based on mutually satisfying and uncritical exchanges between leaders and followers, much in the nature of reward and punishment behaviours, based on achievement of goals and objectives. Bass (1995) proposes that in transactional leadership, leaders appeal to the self interest of followers, within an exchange-based model. Bass proposes that there are four dimensions to transactional leadership, namely:

- **contingent reward**; offering valued resources in exchange for support
- **management by exception - active**; monitoring performance and taking corrective action
- **management by exception - passive**; intervening only in serious problems
- **laissez-faire**; avoidance of responsibilities

The extant literature raises an important potential distinction in the perspective of leaders about the expectations they have from a decision-making team. For instance, the transactional leader might be more likely to use the team as a means of making decisions by the most efficient and expedient method to enact the decision transaction. The transformational leader on the other hand - with their focus on intellectual stimulation and meeting the needs of followers - might be more likely to see the decision team setting as an opportunity to foster follower growth and development, and to build relationships.

### 6.2.2 Team Member Outcome Orientation

From the point of view of the role of team members in decision-making, the literature on diversity in teams (Galbraith, 1973; Ashby, 1956) identifies that member interests and motivators in the decision-making process are likely to be heterogeneous. Research on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) provides an insight into the psychological motivators behind exchanges which take place between employees. Because decision teams are places of social exchange, this extant research has relevance for the current research program in understanding motivations at the individual team member level. In particular, the theory of social structure (Emerson, 1964) is an important concept from sociology which explains human behaviour in a
range of organisational settings and circumstances. The central assumption in social structure theory is that individual actions are an expression of the individual’s responses to circumstances, and will differ between individuals.

Two paradigms which are central to social structure research are exchange theory and network theory (Cook & Whitmeyer, 1993). In simple terms, exchange theory examines the relationship between individual organisational actors. Network theory, on the other hand, seeks to interpret patterns in these individual exchanges in the context of network connections. Both theories take a configurationist approach, whereby inferences are drawn from social relations, and from positions exhibited by actors during interactions. In their most rudimentary form, exchange networks are simply individual exchange relations which are connected into sets (Cook & Whitmeyer, 1992). According to Walker et al. (2000), through the forces of reciprocity and organisational citizenship, these sets over time assume the status of more deeply embedded networks, which either assume a partnership-like character, or are based on more simple and uncritical exchanges.

The researcher considered that the concept of organisational actors building exchange networks through their interactions was of potential relevance to this study, as it provided a basis for examining whether there was a link between member relationships in their everyday job roles, and their behaviours towards each other within the decision team. The extant research suggested that relationships developed in day to day interaction could not be put aside when members (including the leader) came together within the decision team setting. Moreover, the extant research suggested that individual behaviours within the team setting might reflect an already established relationship pattern between members, which was defined through their broader day-to-day interactions. This was thought, therefore, to be a potentially relevant lens for examining the outcome orientation of team members in the current research program, in particular how they sought to influence other members and the leader during decision-making.

Using the theoretical paradigms referred to as an initial reference point for early observations of team behaviour, the researcher examined the outcome orientation of the study teams. This
Chapter 6: Team Outcome Orientation

This chapter examines how the individual motivations and perspectives of team leaders and team members affected the outcome orientation of the teams, in terms of the decisions they made.

6.3 TEAM OUTCOME ORIENTATION – AN EXPLORATION

While the analysis of team process orientation at Chapter 5 focused on process dynamics within the teams, the data collection and analysis process also identified that teams made different types of decisions in different circumstances. Moreover, there was an indication that dissent was often present during discussions, and was not always resolved in a way that reflected consensual commitment to decisions.

These differences are perhaps not surprising, given the fact the teams did not have homogenous underlying organisational roles, and did not deal with an identical set of decision issues during the observation period.

However, notwithstanding these differences, the current research program established that each team’s outcome orientation (as reflected in final decisions) could be dimensionalised according to whether the team sought to build partnerships through their decisions; or to act as independent entities through their decisions. While this dynamic is explored in detail in the analysis which follows, by way of introducing these concepts, partnership intent reflected an orientation towards decisions which fostered an on-going shared relationship with clients and other organisational areas, whereas independent intent reflected more closed, limited, and transaction-like behaviours.
The current research program also identified that the outcome orientation of teams was influenced by the perspective of both team leaders and individual team members on decision issues. Moreover, the study identified important properties which directly influenced these perspectives.

Finally, the current research program indicated that the teams did not have discretion in every case as to the type of decisions they reached, and in this sense, particular situational limiting factors were identified as important in determining team outcomes.

Three lower order categories of *team outcome orientation* emerged from the data analysis process. These were *leader decision orientation; team member decision orientation;* and *situational limiting factors*. These are set out at Table 6.1, and are now discussed in detail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6.1</th>
<th>Higher Order Category of Team Outcome Orientation – Lower Order Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader Decision Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Member Decision Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational Limiting Factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4 **LOWER ORDER CATEGORY: LEADER DECISION ORIENTATION**

The current research study identified leader decision orientation as an important lower order category, within the higher order category of team outcome orientation. In the observations of teams during the decision-making process and in the attendant individual interviews, this issue emerged as important to team decision outcomes.

Leader decision orientation was found to be important, in that it influenced the underlying settings for the teams in reaching decision outcomes, and also influenced the decision outcomes themselves. Conclusions about the role of leader decision orientation have been based on progressive iterations of qualitative data analysis as outlined in Chapters 3 and 4, as well as data gathered in a more empirical way, through the application of an established survey instrument which measured leadership styles. This mixed-method approach was discussed in Chapter 3, and was important in the current research program for reliably establishing conclusions about the influence which leaders had within their teams.

Interpretive readings of the data arising from the current research program identified two important properties of leader decision orientation, namely relationship emphasis in leadership style and partnership intent. These are set out in Table 6.2, and are now discussed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6.2 Lower Order Category of Leader Decision Orientation – Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Emphasis in Leadership Style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.
6.4.1. **Property of Leader Decision Orientation: Partnership Emphasis in Leadership Style**

In the analysis of team process orientation set out at Chapter 5, the theoretical coding framework identified the presence of team leader behaviours which were seen to either facilitate, or impede effective team processes. In particular, a strong positive correlation was found between team leader support for dissent, and team members reaching consensual commitment around decision outcomes.

This dynamic indicated that the style of leadership used by leaders within their teams was an important consideration *per-se*, and was likely to have an effect on team outcomes, just as it had on team processes. Indeed, during confidential interviews a number of team members made direct reference to the team leader’s approach and disposition as being factors in whether they were prepared to put a dissenting point of view. The analysis of team process orientation set out in Chapter 5 established some preliminary data about the differences in leadership style between the leaders of the study teams.

The most important difference which emerged from the qualitative data was the attitude of team leaders to development of consensual commitment within their teams. Inherent in the development of consensual commitment was the effective management of dissent, and in particular, ensuring that dissenting team members were made to feel included, and not marginalised as a result of their dissenting behaviour.

As illustrated in Chapter 5, team leader behaviours were seen to either actively encourage positive discussion and debate around alternative views, or alternatively were seen to be quite dismissive and discouraging of debate. Individual interviews with dissenters indicated that where they felt their views had not been seriously considered and incorporation within the team discussion, they had been left with residual concerns about the decision outcome. Moreover, the excerpts from interviews cited in Chapter 5 indicated that a number of dissenters had felt unsupported by their team leader in their right to dissent.
The essential difference between the leaders related to their commitment to building and maintaining effective relationships. The interviews which were cited in Chapter 5 indicated that dissenters invariably felt they were taking some degree of risk in disagreeing. For this reason, the positive management of dissent behaviour was essentially concerned with the maintenance of relationships within the teams.

Examples were provided in Chapter 5 of where the failure to value dissenting behaviour and manage it constructively had left dissenters feeling their relationship with the leader and other team members had been damaged. The findings from the examination of team processes in Chapter 5 also indicated that failure to adequately consider alternative views had limited the degree of information search, and the level of intellectual debate around decision items.

In view of the importance of the leader’s approach which emerged in the qualitative data, a more empirically based picture of leadership styles was obtained through application of a survey instrument which measured this phenomenon in a comprehensive way.

### 6.4.1.1 Measurement of Leadership Styles

A widely recognised and respected leadership style measurement instrument (Podsakoff et al., 1990; Podsakoff et al., 1984) was completed anonymously by each team member, in respect to their leader. The leader was also asked to self-report using the same instrument. The instrument is discussed in detail in Part 2, and its purpose was to measure follower perceptions of the leader’s style in relation to four categories of transformational, and four categories of transactional leadership behaviours, which were established by the extant research.

Importantly, the leadership style instrument was administered after the researcher had completed team observations and interviews. Using this approach, the formal assessment of team leader style did not influence the researcher’s qualitative examination of this phenomenon through team observations and individual interviews.

A comparison of the ratings for each team leader’s leadership style appears at Appendix E.
The survey instrument responses highlighted some marked differences between the leaders in some important measures of leadership style. The measures where there was such a difference, and where the survey responses indicated an acceptable to high level of scale reliability, are summarised at Table 6.3. To determine scale reliability, Cronbach’s alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was calculated using all responses to each leadership instrument sub-scale. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of more than .7 were regarded as acceptable for the purposes of this analysis (Podsakoff et al., 1990), and are reported in Table 6.3, which also summarises the mean and standard deviation for the areas of the survey where the leaders differed markedly.

**TABLE 6.3**

*Leadership Style Survey - Summary of Significant Differences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformational</th>
<th>Leader 1: Mean (sd)</th>
<th>Leader 2: Mean (sd)</th>
<th>Leader 3: Mean (sd)</th>
<th>Leader 4: Mean (sd)</th>
<th>( \alpha )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role modelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- leads by doing</td>
<td>1.71 (.95)</td>
<td>3.33 (.51)</td>
<td>2.75 (.46)</td>
<td>2.75 (.95)</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- role modelling</td>
<td>2.57 (.53)</td>
<td>3.16 (.75)</td>
<td>3.25 (.46)</td>
<td>3.25 (.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- leads by example</td>
<td>2.50 (.54)</td>
<td>3.16 (.75)</td>
<td>3.12 (.35)</td>
<td>3.0 (.81)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualises</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- doesn’t consid flgs*</td>
<td>2.16 (.75)</td>
<td>3.83 (.40)</td>
<td>2.0 (1.06)</td>
<td>3.50 (.57)</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- respects feelings</td>
<td>2.66 (.81)</td>
<td>3.50 (.83)</td>
<td>2.57 (.53)</td>
<td>3.50 (.57)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- personal needs</td>
<td>2.66 (.81)</td>
<td>3.66 (.81)</td>
<td>2.0 (.53)</td>
<td>3.25 (.50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- treats unthoughtfully*</td>
<td>2.66 (1.03)</td>
<td>3.66 (.81)</td>
<td>2.0 (.53)</td>
<td>4.0 (0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stimulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- old probs new ways</td>
<td>2.85 (.37)</td>
<td>3.50 (.83)</td>
<td>2.62 (.74)</td>
<td>2.75 (.50)</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- makes me think</td>
<td>3.0 (.57)</td>
<td>3.33 (.94)</td>
<td>2.87 (.83)</td>
<td>2.25 (.50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- rethink</td>
<td>2.85 (.37)</td>
<td>3.0 (.89)</td>
<td>2.75 (.88)</td>
<td>2.0 (.81)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- examine basic assump</td>
<td>2.28 (.48)</td>
<td>2.83 (1.16)</td>
<td>2.62 (.74)</td>
<td>1.75 (.95)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent reward</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- positive feedback</td>
<td>3.42 (.78)</td>
<td>3.16 (.98)</td>
<td>1.87 (.83)</td>
<td>2.75 (.50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- special recognition</td>
<td>3.0 (.81)</td>
<td>3.16 (.98)</td>
<td>2.25 (1.16)</td>
<td>2.25 (1.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ack improvement</td>
<td>3.0 (.81)</td>
<td>3.16 (.98)</td>
<td>1.75 (.88)</td>
<td>2.25 (1.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- commends</td>
<td>2.57 (.97)</td>
<td>3.33 (1.03)</td>
<td>1.75 (.88)</td>
<td>3.0 (.81)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- pays compliments</td>
<td>3.0 (.81)</td>
<td>3.16 (1.32)</td>
<td>2.12 (1.12)</td>
<td>3.25 (.50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- informs boss</td>
<td>2.85 (1.06)</td>
<td>3.16 (.98)</td>
<td>1.71 (.75)</td>
<td>2.74 (.95)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- will reward me</td>
<td>1.85 (.69)</td>
<td>2.66 (1.63)</td>
<td>1.87 (.99)</td>
<td>1.75 (.95)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- help me progress</td>
<td>2.71 (1.25)</td>
<td>3.16 (.98)</td>
<td>2.62 (.74)</td>
<td>3.25 (.95)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- good perf un-noted*</td>
<td>3.0 (.81)</td>
<td>2.83 (1.32)</td>
<td>1.87 (1.35)</td>
<td>3.0 (.81)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- no praise fr good job*</td>
<td>3.0 (.57)</td>
<td>3.16 (.98)</td>
<td>1.75 (1.16)</td>
<td>3.25 (.95)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* denotes ‘reverse’ question  
\( \alpha \) denotes Cronbach’s alpha coefficient  
sd denotes standard deviation from mean
In the spirit of the grounded theory method, the interpretation of these quantitative data was undertaken qualitatively. The leadership style instrument indicated that the essential areas where the leaders differed related to their emphasis on transformational vis-à-vis transactional approaches to interacting with their team members within the day to day working environment.

Team Leader 2 displayed a high level of emphasis on transformational behaviours, as evidenced by mean ratings in the range of 3.16 to 3.33 on role modelling sub scale items; 3.50 to 3.83 on providing individualised support sub scale items; and 2.83 to 3.50 on providing intellectual stimulation sub scale items, with a standard deviation of less than 1.0 in all but one of the item scores on these sub scales. This leader also showed a balance of positive transformational leadership in their leadership style, as indicated by mean scores in the range of 2.66 to 3.33 on contingent reward sub scale items, with the mean on all but one item being above 3.0. However, the range of standard deviations (.98 to 1.32) suggested that some team members perceived the leader’s performance on this indicator differently to others.

By contrast, the mean scores for Team Leaders 1, 3 and 4 were more than 1 point lower than Team Leader 2 on at least one sub scale item relating to transformational leadership behaviours. Moreover, in these instances the mean score was in a range which indicated the particular behaviour was not regarded by the respondents as being substantially in evidence by the leader. In the case of Team Leader 1, the item concerned was “leading by doing” (mean 1.71); in the case of Team Leader 3, there were 3 such items under providing individualised support (mean 2.0 for each item); and in Team Leader 4’s case, there were 2 such items under provides intellectual stimulation (means of 1.75 and 2.0). In all of these cases, the standard deviation in the ratings was less than 1.0, which suggested a consistency of view on the part of the respondents.

On positive transactional leadership behaviours, Team Leaders 1 and 4 were not ranked as highly as Team Leader 2, although Team Leaders 1 and 4 were ranked relatively more highly compared with Team Leader 3. This conclusion is evidenced by Team Leaders 1 and 4 having means of more than 2.5, and 2.25 respectively for the majority of sub scale items under
contingent reward behaviour, while the means for Team Leader 3’s rankings were below 2.5 on all but one sub scale item. As in the case of Team Leader 2, for Team Leaders 1,3 and 4 the range of standard deviations for the sub scale item scores for positive transactional behaviour suggested that in all the teams involved in the study, there was a lack of consensus about team leader transactional behaviour on the part of team members. This contrast would not be unexpected, given that this particular behaviour relates to the setting and management of individual performance, which is likely to elicit a different response for example from higher, compared to lower performing followers/respondents.

While the leadership style instrument did identify important prima-facie differences between the leaders in terms of their leadership styles, a more detailed analysis of leadership style was undertaken in relation to each individual. This analysis encompassed a more general evaluation of their leadership approach, arising from the fact that all leadership measures within the instrument except two returned a scale reliability coefficient of: \( \alpha \geq 0.7 \). For the purposes of this analysis, non contingent punishment measures, and non contingent reward measures were excluded from the analysis (\( \alpha = .45 \) and \( \alpha = .42 \) respectively).

Team Leader 1:

Team Leader 1 was rated as not highly transformational, with strengths in articulating a vision, but low ratings in areas of role modelling, and providing support and intellectual stimulation for team members. Team Leader 1 had mid-level ratings on the positive aspects of transactional leadership behaviour (contingent reward).

These data were triangulated with interview data through reflexive data analysis. The leadership style rating was found to be consistent with comments made by 50% of team members to the effect that the team was not used for making decisions in a way which members could engage with. In fact, there was a feeling by some team members interviewed that decisions were taken elsewhere by the leader.

Examples of comments along these lines by two different team members included:
“… the sessions seem to be more of here’s a piece of information, we don’t seem to spend a particular amount of time on tackling decisions. We don’t tend to spend time addressing what might be perceived as sensitive issues … I do have a concern that (leader) uses the meeting as an information pushing stuff, that we don’t tend to have an opportunity to debate critical issues and make a decision as the department. So the meeting process almost supports the whole silo mentality we have in the department, and the agenda kind of flows across that …” [data, Team 1]

“Well I really don’t think we get into much useful debate, you know about the bigger issues, more strategic things. You know it’s really hygiene type issues. Pretty pedestrian stuff really. There’s no real time for any in-depth debates and discussion. It’s controlled pretty rigidly, and if you want to talk about some of the things we should reflect on, it doesn’t happen there.” [data, Team 1]

Interestingly, the team leader, in discussing the way the operation of the decision team had evolved, commented that, “I found myself having to take a fairly tough line as the chair to ensure that those things that were specific to an individual’s needs weren’t being aired, but it was genuinely a forum for issues of multi-lateral significance to be raised” [data, team 1]. In this sense, the reflexive readings indicated a disconnection between the team leader’s perspective about the decision team role, and that of a number of team members. The leader clearly intended it to be a decision-making forum for broader departmental issues, while members saw it as being more of an information dissemination forum. The low rating given to this team leader by their followers on the issue of engagement at the individual level was consistent with the view that the decision team was not a forum for discussion and debate of decision issues.

This finding was also consistent with the data which showed that in this team there were only two instances of dissenting behaviour over the ten decision-making observations, whereas in the other three teams there was a two to three fold greater incidence of dissent. This difference could be at least partly explained by the doubts on the part of members in this team about whether the forum was genuinely one for discussion and decision-making.

A qualitative analysis of Team Leader 1’s leadership style indicated that, overall, this leader had a transactional approach.
Team Leader 2:

Team Leader 2 rated very highly on transformational leadership behaviours, and also positive transactional leadership behaviours (contingent reward).

This was consistent with positive comments from all but one team member about the ability to engage in the decision-making process during management team discussions. Representative comments included:

“There are often different view points and if I think something I’ll say it, but you know (the leader’s) open to that … I think (leader’s) not judgemental, (leader’s) open, ethical and open, encourages creativity and innovation.” [data, Team 2]

“I don’t think there’s anybody who feels they can’t say what they think. And even taking into consideration the introverts and extroverts in the group, I think people are able to deal well with each other. I think it’s a non threatening environment.” [data, Team 2]

This sentiment appeared to be consistent with the view of the team leader in terms of what the leader saw as the importance of the team in decision-making for the department:

“... we often need to look not just at the implications for an individual product or service, but across the products or services. I use it as an opportunity to communicate with people, and then to raise a discussion about the implications. Sometimes that leads to cross discussions that you wouldn’t get if you only spoke to each individual one to one.” [data, Team 2]

Notwithstanding this generally very good symmetry between the leader’s and team members’ expectations about the decision-making team, one team members did express a view that decision-making could be managed more deliberately by the team leader. Nevertheless, the overall picture was consistent with the rating of the team leader’s leadership style overall, and was consistent with the fact that in ten(10) observations of decision-making, the presence of member dissent was observed in five(5) cases. Moreover, dissent was processed to an outcome where members reached harmony of interest around a decision in four(4), or 80% of these 5 cases.

A qualitative analysis of Team Leader 2’s leadership style indicated that, overall, this leader had a transformational approach.
Team Leader 3:

As indicated in the summary at Table 6.3, Team Leader 3’s leadership style was somewhat more transformational than Team Leader 1, but with the weakest performance of all the team leaders on the positive aspects of transactional leadership style. Reflexive data readings across the survey instrument responses and interviews identified that a low follower rating given to this leader on engaging individuals was consistent with comments by 50% of team members about the leader’s day to day behaviour in the team setting. The following were representative examples from the open-coded data of comments by two different team members about the atmosphere around dissent and discussion within the team:

“I think it varies. It varies not only with the individual but it varies with the matter at hand ... I think quite often people do feel cut off and yes I think that happens. Another point of view is given pretty short shrift ... It always hurts a bit. It’s always a bit embarrassing. Painful for the people who are experiencing it. I also think it’s a bit of a lesson for the people who haven’t personally experienced it. So that some people arrange things so they’ll never experience it, and some people bite their tongue – well perhaps not bite their tongue they just hold their piece really, be a bit more careful, more guarded.” [data, Team 3]

“But often (the team leader) will just be a bit dismissive of it, and won’t allow there to be discussion of it ... if I go to a committee, you know, and there’s this kind of mythology that we’re going to have decision-making, I want to discuss things, and there to be some decisions made. Anyway (our team) isn’t that sort of meeting, it’s just an information forum.” [data Team 3]

These sentiments were considered to indicate that members did not see the decision team setting as a place of genuine open discussion in all cases. The team leader appeared to recognise this aspect of their leadership style, and made no apology for their approach. In an individual interview they commented:

“I mean I try not to be too directive unless there’s a particular issue where I see a win, and we have to go in a certain way, where it’s not totally open. Otherwise, I try to let them have input if they wish to, but I don’t go out and try to force everybody to have an input. In terms of encouraging alternative points of view, I think there’s probably a bit of group-think in there, it tends to be at times a bit self-censoring, the group, but as you would know with some of the people in the group (example), if we didn’t have a little bit of that we’d be all over the place.” [data, Team 3]

Notwithstanding the feeling that dissent was not actively encouraged by the team leader, it was interesting that during the ten(10) team decisions observed, dissenting behaviour was present six(6) times, the highest of all the teams. It is instructive however that the dissenting
behaviour was essentially carried out by the same two team members, or 25% of the team. By comparison, in Team 2 dissent behaviour was in evidence by five team members, or 72% of the team. More importantly, the presence of dissent was only resolved to a situation of harmony of interest in half (50%) of cases by this particular team leader, compared to 80% by Team Leader 2. A qualitative analysis of Team Leader 3’s leadership style indicated some transformational aspects, but mostly reflected transactional characteristics.

Team Leader 4:

Team Leader 4 was more transformational than Team Leader 3, and also rated higher on the positive aspects of transactional leadership than Team Leader 3, though the ratings suggested they were not as transformational as Team Leader 2. The reflexive readings supported this conclusion, with 75% of team members indicating they felt the decision-making team was a place where dissent was encouraged, and they felt comfortable about expressing an alternative view. However one team member disagreed, and commented:

“The management team? Ahm it varies. I find the style and all that from time to time depending on what the topic is, and who has brought up the topic. And sometimes I find that when there’s lots of things going on usually not a lot of discussion takes place. But when there’s not a lot of things happening – on the agenda. And I usually find that my papers get picked on more. I don’t know, they’re interested in it or maybe because of my reaction, or because I’m an easy pick I don’t know. I find that my papers quite often get more scrutiny than others.” [data, Team 4]

Team Leader 4, when interviewed, made the following comment about dissent in the team:

“Well I encourage it. I don’t know if you’ve picked it up but they’ll tell me if (the team leader) is losing it, or whatever. And the good thing about that group as well is we don’t suffer from group think too much, I think there’s diversity of personality types, which can be a bit of a challenge from time to time. People see it with different sets of glasses, come forward with a different set of eyes.” [data, Team 4]

These data suggested an intention on the team leader’s part to create an environment of critical reflection. A qualitative analysis of Team Leader 4’s leadership style indicated they were overall transformational in their approach, though not as strongly as Leader 1.

In conclusion, data developed by researcher observation and interviews, when triangulated with data from the team leadership style instrument, indicated that the team leaders had quite
different leadership styles in the context of the behaviours associated with transformational vis-à-vis transactional paradigms of leadership.

### 6.4.1.2 Differences in Leadership Styles

The extant research about leadership styles (Burns, 2003) indicates that the ideal style is one which embodies transformational behaviours to a high degree. The extant research suggests that transformational behaviours - in particular individual consideration and intellectual stimulation - are positively motivating for followers, because *inter alia* they provide a platform from which followers can actively engage their powers of critical reflection and debate, can provide input to decisions beyond their immediate job roles, and (in so doing) can learn and grow as individuals. By contrast, the extant research suggests that overly-transactional styles are quite unsatisfying for followers, particularly where there is an emphasis by the leader on identifying and punishing mistakes.

The measurement of leadership styles indicated that the leaders differed in terms of their degree of transformational leadership style. The more detailed survey instrument responses indicated that the essential difference between the leaders related to the components of transformational leadership which are to do with the leader’s relationship with followers at an individual level. The essential difference highlighted at Table 6.3 was whether the leaders emphasised relationship issues such as intellectual stimulation and individual support (transformational behaviours), or more reward and punishment (transactional behaviours) in their approach to interactions with followers.

The data from the formal measurement of leadership style, when triangulated with the data from team observations and interviews, validated the conclusion that the leaders in the study differed in terms of the emphasis they placed on relationships in their leadership styles. This was found to have particular implications for effective team processes around management of dissent and conflict within the study teams, as outlined in Chapter 5. Furthermore, it was found that the difference in the level of relationship emphasis in leadership styles also had implications for team outcomes.
In the context of the differences noted in leadership styles, an analysis was undertaken of the leaders’ approach to relationship-building, both in and through their decision-making teams. In the context of the importance of internal partnership-building for knowledge industries established by the extant research (Pettigrew & Fenton, 2000), this analysis addressed the question of whether differences in relationship emphasis by leaders influenced the degree of partnership intent which they displayed during decision-making.

### 6.4.2 Property of Leader Decision Orientation: Partnership Intent

Interpretive data readings indicated that leaders showed an overall intent towards acting in either a partnership way, or acting in an independent way towards clients and other organisational areas.

Interpretive data readings indicated that team leaders did provide input during discussions which could be seen as being partnership-building in intent. The data analysis indicated this was sometimes in evidence in discussions about client issues, but was more often in evidence during discussions about other areas of the organisation, or sections within their own departments. Leader behaviours which were interpreted as an intent to act in a partnering way included verbal cues showing high levels of attention to changing client needs, or collaborative overtures about working with other areas, for example to develop shared-service models.

In the interpretive readings, partnership intent by a leader in decision-making was seen to have characteristics quite opposite in many ways to an intent to act independently. Partnership intent reflected an emphasis on a bi-directional approach to communication, in the sense of soliciting and incorporating the requirements of clients; the inference of a continuing rather than arms-length nature to the interaction; and an emphasis on building on-going rapport with, and responsiveness to the other party, rather than putting a boundary around the transaction itself.
The open coding indicated that all leaders exhibited partnership approaches to relationship-building during some discussions. The following are representative examples of this:

**Leader, Team 1:**

(In relation to a discussion about how to provide IT systems access to visitors)
“So there’s a general issue we share ... one of the issues we can fall back with is we see the end result of problems that are hard to sort of imagine in a vacuum, so if we can somehow coordinate by talking around a table, you know, issues came up with ...”

(To a presenter who had reported back on a senior level teaching committee meeting)
“Can I ask you to have a think about how we might turn that excellent sort of pile of informational resource from our clients into something we actually could grapple with. You mentioned something that might turn into a (funding), and with the faculty we need to … Could you do that?”

**Leader, Team 2:**

(In a discussion about simplifying product and service lines for the division)
“It’s also about saying well … rather than having multiple product maps … and so on, having a collective view that says ‘we need someone who is looking at collaboration and communication collectively’. So when something like (example) comes along, we don’t then go and create another product or service called (example), we look at it in the context that it’s a collaborative or communicative technology.”

(In relation to a partnership proposal with a government department in support of a new faculty)
“… adopt a strategy to synergise collections so rather than (government department) purchasing a whole series of books or us purchasing a whole series of books and each of us having individual views of our collections, we call and group and look at collection development issues across both libraries. Looking at issues such as borrowing rights, use of technology, the issue of the use of IT across both institutions.”

**Leader, Team 3:**

(Discussion about staff attending conferences to deliver joint papers with faculty)
“It involves them (staff) with academics and that’s very useful.”

(In a discussion about a shared staffing pool with another institution)
“We haven’t taken any of theirs on, so if we could bend over backwards a bit, you know, particularly if you have casual vacancies and you might have someone marginally better, can you lean a bit towards (institution) if it’s only a casual thing, and give them a go, so we can try to build the relationship …?”
Leader, Team 4:

(In a discussion about collaborative software development)
“I’m going to talk to (staff member from another department) to explore what we could contribute in the way of a resource from this perspective.”

### 6.4.2.1 Lack of Partnership Intent

By comparison, there were also situations identified in the data analysis where leader input suggested an intent to act in a non-partnering, or independent way. This was identified when the leader’s verbal cues indicated they were suggesting a course of action based on enacting a simple transaction to resolve an issue. Examples included delivering a service to a client in an area of service responsibility, or dealing with another part of the organisation in a formal, business-like way. More specifically, a leader’s intention to act independently was indicated in the interpretive readings where they made comments which suggested they were proposing a uni-directional transaction; focusing primarily on the department’s needs; and reflecting an arms-length attitude towards the other party, where a boundary was effectively placed around the transaction itself.

The open and axial coding revealed that all leaders exhibited an intention to act independently on occasions during discussions. The following are representative examples of leader input which was interpreted in this way:

Leader, Team 1:

(In relation to a proposed new quality assurance initiative)
“No one’s standing around waiting to take on extra work, so it may be a simple reality to it. … At the moment you do a bit of training, you do the examination, and at the end of the day you hope it doesn’t annoy you too much while you’re getting your prime business done.”

(In relation to problems identified with establishing systems access for new staff)
“I’m sure that we can apply some sort of fast track approach and maybe if you do raise that through (name), and it can bounce to HR with us basically saying, ‘We think you should take carriage of this, be responsible, and we’ve already though of a few of the tech solution issues’.”
Leader, Team 2:

(In relation to communication with an overarching change management committee)
“That’s an operational change. If we wanted to change the operating hours during semester from what they are, we’d need to tell them.”

(In relation to a discussion about overall departmental performance)
“We probably need to do a review of where we’re at with the operational plan. A 6 month review. What I’d like to purpose is that we do it as part of the (meeting), where we go through each of the items in (the department’s plan), and (managers) can give a briefing back for that.”

Leader, Team 3:

(In relation to a discussion about the need to replace client resource items)
“Maybe I should have this in-principle, and we need to sort this out once and for all ... It should be coming out of the (other department) component of the (central fund).”

(In relation to a concern about space allocation by the university)
“In the next few months we may be very unpopular, but we have to push this. I feel if we don’t make a stand at the beginning, we’re going to finish up with totally unsatisfactory quarters up there for some years to come ... we have to try to hold the line, we may be beaten down, but we have to put it in front of the university.”

Leader, Team 4:

(In relation to a discussion about a provider increasing their charges)
“But they haven’t acted in good faith. They’ve increased the maintenance charge over 100% in twelve months ... so well, we need to have another discussion with them. I’m happy to be the bad guy.”

(In relation to a discussion about a proposed funding model for back up data storage for faculty)
“Are we going to get any clients who are going to pay for this? Like we invest a million dollars and try to get it back, but will they come?”

To understand more fully the attitude of team leaders towards decision-making, all decision discussions were analysed to categorise the leaders’ apparent intent.

The summary of team leader responses and positions on individual decision items is set out at Figure 6.2, and summarised at Table 6.4. For each decision item, the leader’s input was rated as showing an intention to act in either a partnership, or an independent way. This analysis indicated a marked difference between the leaders on this indicator. Moreover the analysis established there was a pattern reflected between the leaders’ overall intent in decision-
making, and their leadership styles. To further validate the researcher’s tentative conclusions about this pattern, each of the leaders was interviewed to obtain their own perspective on this issue, in their own words.

Table 6.4
Team Leader Relationship Intent

| Team 1 | Decision 1 |  ▼  
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<td>Team 4</td>
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*note that in some decisions leaders did not express a view either way

Legend:

▲ Partnering intent
▼ Independent intent

Figure 6.2 Property: Team Leader Relationship Intent - Partnership vis-a-vis Independent
6.4.2.2  Partnership Intent – Leader Perspectives

Leader 2 - who was seen to have a transformational leadership approach, with a strong emphasis on relationships - when asked about the way they sought to use the decision team to build relations with other organisational areas, indicated that “I encourage that development. It’s not one where it’s something I specifically target those meetings to do, it may be a secondary effect of the way I work with people that it comes out in the group.” [data, Team 2]

The researcher asked Leader 1 - who had a transactional leadership style, with low emphasis on relationships - about a number of observed instances where the relations with a particular organisational area had been a continuing subject during team decisions. During these discussions, this leader had been seen to exhibit a fairly arms-length attitude towards the other organisational area concerned. When interviewed, the leader in question acknowledged this, and commented “… there were a number of strategic things … languishing, which we weren’t - as the university - making enough progress on, which would require a joint action by (the two departments), but the leadership was primarily coming from (the other department)” . The leader also commented that there was not “a sophisticated enough relationship between the two areas.” [data, Team 1]

In conclusion, Leader 1 acknowledged that the relationship with the other organisational area “… was transactional in terms of basic infrastructure support and a couple of other bits and pieces, but not broad enough to ensure there was regular enough contact between the key players”. The leader also indicated they had been “… certainly derelict in terms of not giving enough attention, providing enough leadership to that cultural frame …” [data, Team 1]

Leader 4 - whose style was considered to be moderately transformational, with some emphasis on relationships - reflected a fairly evenly-balanced view when asked about their attitude towards partnering with other organizational areas. The leader’s comments included, “Parts of the staff are clients, and parts are partners.” The leader concluded, on reflection, “So there’s a bit of both.” [data, Team 4]
There was a basic consistency found between the difference in leadership style between the leaders, and the difference in balance each gave in their comments about partnership-building, as compared to basic exchange concepts. This consistency was taken to validate the researcher’s conclusions about the linkages between their leadership styles and the degree of relationship intent shown by leaders during decision-making.

The summary at Table 6.4 indicates that Team Leader 1 had a markedly stronger leaning towards acting independently over acting in partnership during decision-making, by a factor of two. On the other hand, the leader of Team 2 had a markedly stronger leaning towards partnering over independent intent, by a similar factor. The leaders of Team 3 and 4 were relatively evenly balanced on this indicator.

In one case for each of two teams, the leader did not express a view about a decision issue. Of itself, this appeared initially to be of little significance. However the implications of no input by a leader during team discussions are explored more fully later in this chapter.

Table 6.4 indicates that the strongly transformational leader with the highest emphasis on relationships, showed mostly a partnership intent during team discussions, while the strongly transactional leader, with the least emphasis on relationships, showed mostly an independent intent. Moreover, there was found to be a relatively strong statistical correlation between the level of relationship emphasis in leadership style, and the level of partnership intent in decision-making. A Spearman rank-order correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ($\rho=.34, p<.01$) between these factors.

6.4.3 Lower Order Category of Leader Decision Orientation - Conclusion

The leaders in this study were identified as having a tendency towards either a transformational, or a transactional leadership style. The factor which differentiated them markedly in their leadership styles was their emphasis on relationships. This differentiation was identified through triangulation of data (Herman & Egri, 2002) from the observed
behaviour of leaders during team discussions, comments made by team members during individual interviews, and data provided by team members in a survey instrument which measured leadership style.

Leaders were also identified, through team observations and interviews, as showing an intent to act in either a partnership or independent way in decisions which involved clients and other organisational areas. While all team leaders showed a combination of both types of intent during individual discussions, the data analysis indicated each team leader showed an overall predominance of one type of intent over the other, when examined across all discussions they were involved in.

The reflexive readings of the data arising from team leader observations indicated that one team leader displayed a marked intention to act in a partnership way, and one to act independently, with the other two leaders displaying a different mixture of both intentions. What was interesting however was the strength of the correlations between the leader’s emphasis on relationships, and their level of partnership intent.

The findings of Chapter 5 about team process effectiveness indicated that in each of these teams, there was dissent behaviour by members. This behaviour, in turn, either did, or did not lead to robust discussion, depending on team climate factors. Chapter 5 also indicated that team climate was influenced by team member as well as team leader behaviours. Therefore, to more completely understand the full range of potential influencing factors in the outcome orientation of the teams in the study, the decision orientation of team members was also examined. The findings about team member orientation in decision-making are now discussed.
6.5 LOWER ORDER CATEGORY: TEAM MEMBER DECISION ORIENTATION

The second lower order category of team outcome orientation was team member decision orientation.

The analysis at Section 6.3 indicated that team leaders were observed to exhibit a particular orientation towards either partnering, or acting independently in their input to decision-making. It became equally apparent in the literal and reflexive readings of the data from team observations and interviews, that individual team members also showed either a partnering, or independent orientation during decision-making.

In the analysis of team leader orientation in decision-making, a strong relationship emerged between aspects of underlying leadership style, and leader decision intent. The analysis turns now to the issue of team member orientation in decision-making.

It became apparent during the study that it was quite artificial to consider the interaction between members during the team decision-making process in isolation from the broader relationships they had with each other (and for that matter their team leaders) in the workplace more generally. The approach taken by members in rating their team leader’s overall leadership style emphasised this point, in that their ratings were made in respect of the overall relationship with their leader, not just the relationship developed within the decision team setting. Moreover, this issue emerged during interviews conducted by the researcher with individual team members, where it became clear that behaviours and interactions within the decision team setting were influenced by broader relationships defined in, and by, the workplace at large.
There are a myriad of influencing factors identified in the literature about leader-follower relationship in the workplace, including the operation of the psychological contract, and the personality type and experience levels of followers. However, in considering a follower’s underlying orientation in terms of their input to decisions, it was considered that the emphasis on relationships in their underlying job role was of particular relevance for the current research program, given the importance established in the extant literature about partnership-based exchange in knowledge industries (Pettigrew & Fenton, 2000).

The relationship perspectives which emerged during team observations were, therefore, explored further through individual discussions with team members, who were quite open about the imperatives which drove them during deliberations within the decision team setting. Through this process, it became apparent that the way a team member’s job role was defined indicated an expectation of a greater or lesser emphasis on relationship-building. This relationship emphasis was seen to flow through to be an influencing factor in their apparent intent in decision-making. Members with roles defined laterally (cross-boundary), with an emphasis on managing cross-departmental services, consistently spoke about the need to balance their needs with broader departmental imperatives. By contrast, members with vertically (within-boundary) defined roles, where the emphasis was on managing a narrowly defined functional activity, conceded they were driven first and foremost by considerations relating to their specific work areas.

*Relationship emphasis in job role* was therefore identified as the first important property of *team member decision orientation*. Secondly (as in the case of the team leaders), *partnership intent* was identified as a further property of *team member decision orientation*. These properties are set out at Table 6.5, and are now examined in detail.

**TABLE 6.5**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Lower Order Category of Team Member Decision Orientation – Properties</th>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship Emphasis in Job Role</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership Intent</td>
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*Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.*
6.5.1 Property of Team Member Decision Orientation: Relationship Emphasis in Job Role

Relationship emphasis emerged during team observations as a point of differentiation between team members when they were contributing to decision-making discussions.

Examples of this difference in perspective were noted, in particular, during discussions about resource matters, where arguably the stakes for members in terms of outcomes were high. It became apparent that during these discussions, members who had more functional roles tended to be less concerned with relationship considerations involving their colleagues. During individual interviews conducted after team observations, these team members made comments such as, “I also think you’ve got to go in for your Branch too. And it’s not going in for your Branch for the sake of it, there are things you want to achieve for your Branch, and you won’t be able to do it unless you get the money.” Another example was a member commenting, “Well first of all it’s batting for (the branch). And obviously it has to be. You’re the one that goes back to your staff and says ‘ok we have this additional list’, and whatever.”

By contrast, members with roles which were more lateral (cross-boundary) in focus made comments which reflected more of an interest in organisational outcomes, reflecting a greater emphasis on group rather than partisan considerations. An example was one member who commented, “The decisions are based on what’s for the strategic good of the (department).” Another such member commented, “… and we collectively choose to cut our cloth to fit the budget we’ve got.”

It became apparent through individual interviews that organisational expectations were defined for team members by their day to day roles, and this had an influence on their relationship perspectives. It was, therefore, considered appropriate to incorporate this dynamic within the analysis of team member behaviour, as it related to decision outcomes. The extant literature was considered to be instructive in this sense, in that it proposes that a leader establishes broad expectations of their followers inter alia through formally articulated role expectations. These expectations are typically expressed by way of formal job design,
Chapter 6: Team Outcome Orientation

and through duty statements, key result areas (KRA’s), and performance targets. These expectations and relationships are also embedded within the structural and reporting arrangements within work areas (Oldham & Hackman, 1981).

By consulting organisation charts and duty statements, it was determined that each team had a mixture of members whose day today job roles could be categorised as having either “laterally” (cross-boundary), or “vertically” (within-boundary) defined responsibility.

6.5.1.1 Impact of Role Definition

Laterally defined responsibility incorporated roles which had combinations of the following characteristics:

- shared responsibility with another area for effective service delivery
- responsibility for provision of a service or function which overlapped with another organisational area (in these cases, both areas provided the same types of service)
- responsibility for a portfolio-based role, which ran across multiple organisational areas

Positions like this in the teams included one that was responsible for managing learning resource procurement and maintenance across four geographically based service outlets; and two positions responsible for provision of high-end technological services, in collaboration with academic areas, in support of sophisticated research activity.

By contrast, there were also positions in each of the teams whose day to day responsibility was defined in vertical terms. Vertically defined responsibility incorporated roles which had combinations of the following characteristics:

- responsibility for a discrete product/service
- responsibility could be seen as a silo-like in definition
- responsibility defined in a self contained way – this meant there was minimal need to work with other areas to complete carriage of responsibilities
- no/minimal influence on their resource outcome by the performance or the resources of other organisational areas
Positions such as this in the teams included two which were responsible for provision and maintenance of underlying technological infrastructure within the organisations; and four positions which managed specific service outlets defined by location/academic discipline.

Based on their position descriptions, and with the assistance of individual interviews to clarify aspects of their roles in some cases, team members were coded by the researcher according to whether their day to day roles were essentially either laterally or vertically defined.

There were some positions for which this distinction was less clear cut. Such positions did have vertically defined responsibilities within their position descriptions. However, after discussing these positions with their occupants, there was an indication that it was extremely difficult to undertake these roles without collaboration with internal clients and/or other managers. Therefore, these positions were coded as “mostly-vertically” in definition, to reflect their distinction from self-contained, “vertically” defined job roles. Examples of “mostly-vertically” defined roles included positions responsible for development of end-user IT services across the institution as a whole, and for managing IT help-desk functions which spanned a number of technical domains.

Using this approach, the individual team member job roles could all be categorised in terms of the following typology of role definition:

- laterally - high emphasis on relationships
- mostly-vertically - medium emphasis on relationships
- vertically - low emphasis on relationships

Figure 6.3 provides a summary within each team of the number of team members whose underlying job roles were determined within each of these categories. In Figure 6.3, a separate column has been provided for each team member whose job role fell within these three categories, with identifying personal data removed for confidentiality purposes. Members with vertically defined roles (low relationship emphasis) are noted in yellow shading; mostly-vertically (medium relationship emphasis) defined roles are noted in green; and laterally
defined roles (high relationship emphasis) in blue. Roles are presented in this order to facilitate the analysis which follows at Section 6.4.2.

A summary of the balance of underlying member job roles within each team is provided at Table 6.6. This analysis indicated that all teams had a mixture of members with laterally and vertically defined job roles, however no teams had the same proportional mix. This observation is made only for the purpose of notation at this point, and the issue of the mixture of job roles within teams and its implications is explored further in Chapters 8 and 9.

An analysis was also undertaken of whether there was a correlation between a leader’s leadership style, and whether the leader defined the job roles for their immediate followers in lateral, as distinct from vertical terms. However, no relationship could be found between these factors. This outcome was taken to indicate that underlying job roles were determined primarily by the nature of the task being done by a given work area, rather than by a leader’s underlying leadership style. However this question and its implications are revisited for further discussion in a broader context in Chapter 8.

Having established the nature of their underlying job roles in terms of emphasis on relationships, an analysis was then conducted of each team member’s partnership-building intent, as indicated by their input to discussion items. This perspective was considered appropriate, given the importance of partnership-building in knowledge industries (Pettigrew & Fenton, 2000). The outcome of this analysis is now discussed.
### 6.5.2 Property of Team Member Decision Orientation: Partnership Intent

A set of indicators arose from interpretive data readings which defined the relationship intent of team members during decision-making discussions.

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These indicators were similar to those identified for leader intent which were discussed at Section 6.3.2, and were classified according to whether the intent was to act in either a partnership, or an independent way. Three examples are now outlined for illustrative effect. To accentuate the differences between these two types of intent in an applied sense, the examples chosen are situations where members of the same team expressed opposing intents during particular team discussions.

The first example involved a discussion about developing a collaborative approach to learning resource management between the university and external stakeholders who were jointly involved in delivering a new teaching program. One member’s input reflected quite an independent intent, when they asked, “If it’s strictly a (discipline) working party, why do all these people have to be there? Why can’t we have a smaller group with the (professionals) ...” Another team member offered a view in support of this, which indicated a similar independent intent, saying “I can think of situations where we’d want to go with a product, but if they’ve got to go through a cast of thousands to get a decision ...” By contrast, a third member responded with a more partnering based perspective, when they said “They don’t want to deal with multiple people, they want to deal with all providers in the universe sector ...”

The second example involved another team, where there was a difference of view between members about whether the department should be seen to be responsive to requests from other organizational areas. The exchange which took place between two team members is set out below, where the first member indicated a partnering orientation, while the second indicated much more of an intent to act independently:

Member 1 (partnership): “Whoever’s been complaining to us should get a big beat up that we’re more than halving the number … push the message out there that we’ve been listening.”

Member 2 (independent): “I actually speak against that. Let’s see if they actually notice. Because I’ve got a theory that ‘hey if we whinge …’ I don’t think that’s a good message to get out here ... if we whinge they’ll change … bit of a dangerous message.”
[data, Team 4]
In a third example involving yet a different team, there was a discussion about having a shared approach to causal staffing between the university and another institution. During the exchange which took place, one member’s input was based very much on using this arrangement to meet their own ends, while another member argued for an approach more in a partnership spirit. Finally the leader commented with a strongly partnering perspective. The discussion which occurred is set out below:

(Member 1 - independent) “In terms of ongoing, if we suddenly have a resignation, and that hardly ever happens, and we wanted to fill something quickly, if we wanted to see if someone from (organisation) was available ...”

(Leader) “When you say quickly, do you want to fill it temporarily until you get it advertised?”

(Member 1) “Yes, just to backfill.”

(Leader) “You don’t mean you want to pinch one of their staff permanently?”

(Member 1) “No. Not unless they’re really good.”

(Member 2 - partnership) “If people apply for our jobs that’s one thing. But we don’t want to offer. We don’t want to be seen to be pinching their staff.”

(Leader - partnership) “We haven’t taken any of theirs on, so if we could bend over backwards a bit, you know, particularly if you have casual vacancies and you might have someone marginally better, can you lean a bit towards (the organisation) if it’s only a casual thing, and give them a go so we can try to build the relationship ...” [data, Team 3]

These examples signified the inherent differences in intent which emerged from the observations of team member inputs during discussions. To validate these preliminary indications in the data, a number of members were interviewed to obtain their own views, in their own words, about their perspective in decision-making discussions.

The following were representative examples of member interview comments which confirmed they had an overall partnering intent:

“… to collectively lay that out so that we make jointly the best decision we can make for the (institution). So that we’re not ignoring sectional interests, but so we can allow people to bring those sectional interests out, let them be out on the table, but then get them to step back from sectional interests and collectively commit to a wider decision.” [data, Team 2]
“I think so, given the close partnership with academics, given the quasi academic role I play myself. I’m quite sensitized to that. I know how that side of it works, and so in a case where there’s any doubt if it’s going to work, I look out for them because there’s not going to – it’s not going to work if you just bull ahead.” [data, Team 4]

6.5.2.1 Lack of Partnership Intent

In contrast to partnership intent, the following are representative examples of member interview comments which indicated an overall intent to act independently during decision-making discussions.

“I also think you’ve got to go in for your Branch too. And it’s not going in for your Branch for the sake of it, there are things you want to achieve for your Branch, and you won’t be able to do it unless you get the money.” [data, Team 3]

“The money – it’s a question of how much I can charge and it’s dependent on what money is available from the capital funds … the management team, what they should be focussing on is the algorithm that I’ve used to get to the model, whether that’s correct or sound, not the dollars I’m charging.” [data, Team 4]

The individual member interviews were found to provide important triangulating data, which allowed the researcher to confidently code and categorise the relationship intent of each team’s members on each decision item, based on the nature of their inputs.

Through literal and interpretive readings of the data, a matrix was developed for each team, showing the patterns of team member input for all decision items. This matrix is set out at Figure 6.4, and identifies inputs as either partnership or independent in intent.

The results from the reflexive readings of team member inputs - in the context of the way their day to day job roles were defined - indicated a high degree of correlation between the emphasis on relationships in job roles, and the nature of intent during decision-making. Cases where team members made no comment were treated neutrally and not accorded a value. The reason for taking this approach was that, notwithstanding that silent members may have had a view about an issue, in reality final decision outcomes could only be based on views which were actually expressed by members during discussions. For summary and comparative purposes, Table 6.6 indicates the mixture of team member job roles within these teams.
A Spearman rank-order correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ($\rho=.58$, $p<.01$) between relationship emphasis in job roles, and the degree of partnership intent which team members exhibited in their input to team discussions. In the correlation analysis, jobs were ranked according to their degree of relationship emphasis. This ranking was based on the proportion of lateral vis-à-vis vertical components to the job role, and was based on the position description and the occupant’s own qualitative comments about their day to day responsibilities, and how they carried these out.

![Figure 6.4 Team Member Relationship Intent: Partnership vis-a-vis Independent](image-url)
6.5.3 Lower Order Category of Team Member Decision Orientation - Conclusion

The team members in the current research program were able to be classified in terms of the emphasis on relationships expressed in their underlying job roles. These job roles were classified according to the way they were defined, namely laterally or vertically. Laterally defined roles included those that looked after a service or group of cross-departmental services, whereas vertically defined roles typically involved being in charge of a functional area. The essential difference in these classifications from the point of view of the current research program was the levels to which team member in their day to day roles were required to collaborate and build relationships with other team members, or with other managers more widely within the organisation.

Team members were also identified through team observations and interviews as showing an overall intent to act in either a partnership, or an independent way. While all team members showed a combination of both types of intent in their input to discussions, the data analysis indicated each team member displayed an overall predominance of one type of intent over the other.

A qualitatively important relationship was found between the degree of relationship emphasis in job roles, and team member partnership intent during decision-making.

The strength of the correlations identified between the relationship emphasis in both leadership styles and job roles and the intent of leaders and team members respectively in decision-making appeared to be an important finding in the current research program. However any interim conclusions in this area needed to be further refined in the context of the types of decisions each team dealt with over the observation period.

The issue of situational factors which were seen to impact on decision-making options for the teams is now discussed.
6.6 LOWER ORDER CATEGORY: SITUATIONAL LIMITING FACTORS

Among the forty decisions addressed by the four teams in the current research program (10 each), there were some similarities between types of decisions addressed, and some distinct differences. This issue is explored more deeply in Chapter 7, which compares team inputs and outcomes when they considered similar, as well as different types of decisions.

However for the purposes of establishing some initial conclusions about the relationship between team leader and team member intent and decision outcomes, it was important to identify limiting factors which may have influenced the data. In particular, it was considered appropriate to identify any decisions where there was no real discretion as to the outcome.

This question was explored through identifying and then disregarding those decision issues which concerned legal, contractual, or organisational governance/delegations matters. Such decisions were seen to have limiting factors in relation to the discretion available to the teams in the way they acted on them in each situation. Reflexive readings of the data indicated that each team dealt with one such matter (out of ten matters considered by each team) over the period of team observations. All other decisions were considered to be ones where the team had an option to make a decision which was either partnership, or independent in orientation.

Figure 6.5, column 12 (entitled “Outcome”) identifies the outcome reached by the teams on each decision, and indicates whether the outcome was partnership-based, or based on acting independently. All decisions for which there could only be one type of outcome were disregarded from subsequent data analysis. In Figure 6.5 these decisions are cross-hatched.
Refining the data in this way, to adjust for situational limiting factors, had the effect of ensuring the data analysis focussed only on those situations where there was considered to be real discretion on the part of teams about their decision outcomes. For each team, there were found to be nine (out of ten) decisions where such discretion existed. Having excluded the decisions for which there were situational limiting factors, it was possible to examine the implications of team leader and team member intent on the overall outcome orientation of each of the teams in the study.
6.7 HIGHER ORDER CATEGORY: TEAM OUTCOME ORIENTATION - IMPLICATIONS

Reflexive readings of the data which arose from team observations and individual interviews indicated there was a difference between team leaders, in terms of their overall orientation towards partnering, as compared to acting independently in decision-making.

While each team dealt with a different range of decisions during the period of the observations, interpretive readings of the data indicated that for the decisions each team dealt with, there was an equal opportunity (in 9 cases each) to process decisions in a way that the outcome reflected either a partnership-based intent, or an intent to act independently.

Moreover, it was instructive that the triangulated data on overall leadership styles showed that the level of partnership intent displayed by leaders in decision-making was closely associated with the level of emphasis they placed on relationships. A further important finding from the data about the role of team leaders was the key role which leaders played in determining final decision outcomes. In 31 of the 36 decisions, the type of team outcome (namely partnership-based, or act-independently) was in accordance with the team leader’s intent, as reflected by their input to discussions. This finding reflected a strong positive relationship ($\rho=.60$, $p<.01$) between leader intent and decision outcome.

In 28 of these 31 cases, the majority of team member intent was also in accord with the leader’s intent. It was interesting, however, that in three cases, the majority of team members showed an opposing intent to the team leader’s, yet the team leader perspective prevailed.
These were:
- decision 9 of Team 1
- decision 1 of Team 2
- decision 2 of Team 3

A possible explanation for this is that in these three cases, the total balance of all perspectives (leader plus members) was in balance (that is it equally favoured partnering and independent), and because there was no clear majority, the decision was carried by the team leader’s intent.

By contrast, the reflexive readings indicated there were three situations across the teams where the nature of the final decision outcome was different to the nature of the leader’s intent. The axial data indicated that in each of these cases, total member perspectives outweighed the leader’s perspective by a clear majority. These three situations were:
- decision 4 for Team 2
- decision 9 for Team 3
- decision 9 for Team 4

Moreover, in the two cases where the team leader did not express a view at all, the final decision also reflected the majority intent type, namely either partnering or independent. These cases were:
- decision 5 for Team 2
- decision 3 for Team 3

These findings indicated that where there was a clear majority of total team member views which was either partnering or independent, this was able to sway the decision to that type of outcome, even if it was contrary to the leader’s intent. It was concluded, therefore, that notwithstanding the demonstrated influence of the team leader’s intent in determining final decision outcomes, there was a more important role for team member intent in shaping final decision outcomes, if the combined team member intent outweighed the team leader’s intent.

A strong positive relationship ($\rho=.75$, p<.01) was found between majority team member intent and the nature of final team decision outcomes.
The comparative influence of team leaders and team members on decision outcomes is illustrated in the correlation matrix at Table 6.7, which shows the relative strengths of the Spearman rank-order correlations between intent and outcomes. In this matrix, leader intent correlates more strongly with team decision outcomes than majority member intent, but not as strongly as total majority intent (leader plus members).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Partnership decision outcome</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Leader partnership intent</td>
<td>0.6**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Majority member partnership intent</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Total majority partnership intent</td>
<td>0.38*</td>
<td>0.40**</td>
<td>0.75**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p<0.01
* p<0.05

6.8 HIGHER ORDER CATEGORY: TEAM OUTCOME ORIENTATION - CONCLUSION

In conclusion, from a grounded theory development perspective, four important qualitative findings emerged from the analysis of the higher order category of team outcome orientation. The findings were supported by non-parametric data analysis and are summarised as:

- a strong relationship \((\rho=0.34, p<0.01)\) between the emphasis on relationships in leadership style, and leader partnership intent during decision-making
- a strong relationship \((\rho=0.58, p<0.01)\) between relationship emphasis in job roles, and team member partnership intent during decision-making
- a strong relationship \((\rho=0.60, p<0.01)\) between team leader intent in decision-making, and the outcome orientation of teams
- a stronger relationship \((\rho=0.75, p<0.01)\) between total majority intent, and the outcome orientation of teams

While the extant research indicates that leadership style is a highly individual phenomenon (Burns, 2003), the current research program found a strong relationship between underlying leadership style and a leader’s intent in decision-making. This study found a similarly strong
relationship between underlying member job roles and their intent in decision-making. What was perhaps of most significance, however, was the indication that team member intent, if it represented a clear majority view, exhibited a greater influence over a team’s outcome orientation than team leader intent.

This finding suggested there may have been an important role for underlying organisational design in shaping the outcome orientation in the top level teams in the study, because design *inter alia* influenced leadership style, and also determined underlying job roles. The current research program findings suggested that relationship emphasis of leaders and team members influenced both their intent in decision-making, and the outcome orientation of their teams, namely to act in a partnering vis-à-vis independent way. The implications of these research findings for organisational design are explored more fully in Chapter 7.

The findings at Chapter 5 suggested that in team process orientation, relationship considerations played an important role in ensuring all team member perspectives were allowed to emerge during team discussions, and in processing discordant perspectives constructively during decision-making. The fact that relationship emphasis also emerged as a key consideration in determining team outcomes suggested that the higher order categories of *team process orientation* and *team outcome orientation* worked together in determining top level decision-making behaviour in the current research program.

The way in which the two higher order categories intersected in the current research program is now explored.
CHAPTER 7

RELATIONAL DISPOSITION AND TRANSACTIONAL DISPOSITION: NEAR-CORE CATEGORIES OF TOP LEVEL TEAM BEHAVIOUR

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In grounded theory-based qualitative research, a near-core category typically emerges as part of an iterative data collection process. A near-core category is one which integrates a number of higher order emergent categories, and facilitates understanding of the relationship between phenomena at a higher level of abstraction (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Two near-core categories emerged from the current research study, namely relational disposition and transactional disposition.

This chapter explores these near-core categories in detail, and draws conclusions about their relationship with each other. This relationship is then developed in greater detail in Chapter 8, which discusses the basic social process of Dyadic Decision-Making which emerged from the current research program.

As the four study teams went about the process of making decisions, a recurring theme in the story line was that the teams exhibited an overall disposition in their decision-making which was either relational or transactional.

Chapters 5 and 6 identified the two higher order categories under which the initial findings from the current research program were categorised, namely team process orientation and
team outcome orientation. This chapter explains how the characteristics of these two higher order categories were seen to combine in distinctive ways when the teams exhibited a particular type of disposition in their decision-making. Importantly, the teams exhibited different characteristics of process and outcome orientation, depending on whether their disposition was relational or transactional. Relational disposition and transactional disposition were therefore identified as two near-core categories, which had unique characteristics in the current research program.

The near-core categories of relational disposition and transactional disposition are represented in Figure 7.1, which depicts the framework of categories which emerged from the current research program. It is from this framework that the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making, which is discussed in Chapter 9, is drawn. All categories were generated by the grounded theory methodology outlined in Part 2.

In this chapter, the discussion of each near-core category is supported throughout by summaries of data which arose from the theoretical coding. Data analysis at progressively higher level of abstraction is incorporated within the discussion to facilitate an understanding of how concepts emerged, and how their relationships were identified (Glaser, 1978; Swanson, 1986).

Throughout this chapter, the iterative nature of grounded theory development is illustrated by the progressive build-up in diagrammatic form of relationships between phenomena, which emerged over progressive iterations of observation and analysis. This progressive theory development is reflected in Figure 7.2, which represents a further iteration of the story line which evolved through the data analysis process.

The chapter begins with an exploration of the concept of disposition as it relates to decision-making by the study teams. The chapter then explores in detail the characteristics of relational and transactional disposition. The chapter concludes with an analysis of indicators which point to these near-core categories being part of a basic social process, namely Dyadic Decision-Making, which is discussed in Chapter 8.
Figure 7.1 Near-Core Categories of Relational & Transactional Disposition
7.2 RELATIONAL DISPOSITION & TRANSACTIONAL DISPOSITION - AN EXPLORATION

As outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, reflexive readings of the data indicated that the higher order phenomena which were most apparent when the teams made decisions related to team processes on the one hand, and team outcomes on the other. The higher order category of team process orientation was dimensionalised as effective vis-à-vis ineffective, in terms of whether teams routinely reached consensual commitment. The higher order category of team outcome orientation was dimensionalised as being to act in partnership vis-à-vis act-independently.

Of the 40 decisions addressed by these teams over the observation period, there were 36 (9 each) where it was considered the team had the opportunity to make a decision based either on acting in partnership, or acting independently. Decisions made across all the teams reflected a mixture of both these approaches.

At a more micro level, leaders and team members were seen to provide input to decisions which could be categorised as having either a partnership or act-independently intent. The reflexive data indicated that both team leader input, and team member input influenced final decision outcomes.

Up to this point, the examination of decision-making in the teams had been conducted on a value-free basis. This meant simply that each decision was categorised as either partnering or independent in its orientation on the data available, without considering the question of whether the appropriate type of decision had actually been made by the team in the circumstances.

This value-free approach had been important as it had allowed the researcher to take a neutral perspective, notwithstanding that behaviour and outcomes were analysed in a subjective way. However, an important consideration in this regard was the context for the research study, in that it was conducted in the substantive setting of knowledge industries. In this context, the
extant research about effective organisational behaviour in knowledge industries could not be ignored. In particular, the research which identified the importance of building partnership-based networks within, and between organisational units in knowledge industries (Pettigrew & Fenton, 2000) was considered to be especially relevant.

Because of this precept established by the extant literature, the researcher took the view that these top level teams - which were part of knowledge industry organisations - should regard decision-making which involved clients and other organisational units as an important opportunity to foster the building of partnership-based external relationships. For this reason, decisions taken by the teams which involved clients and other organisational areas were seen to be of particular interest in the study, especially those where the teams did not reach a partnership-building outcome in their decision-making. These types of decisions were, therefore, isolated in the data and analysed in more detail. The results indicated that, when teams had the option of either a partnership or independently-based decision, factors relating to team process orientation and team outcome orientation combined in different ways when the teams favoured one outcome over the other.

Because of these different combinations of characteristics, two separate categories were identified in the data about the disposition which teams showed in their decision-making. These categories were seen to have distinctively different characteristics. Furthermore, it was concluded from the data that these categories were concerned with a phenomenon which occurred at a higher level of abstraction than the higher order categories discussed at Chapters 5 and 6. This phenomenon was concerned with the disposition shown by the teams towards engaging with the wider organisational community. These near-core categories were therefore identified as being relational disposition and transactional disposition.

The near-core categories of relational disposition and transactional disposition are now explored in detail.
7.3 RELATIONAL DISPOSITION

One of the near-core categories which arose from the current research program concerned the finding that some teams displayed an overall disposition in their decision-making which was distinctively relational in nature.

“Relational” in this sense indicated a disposition to approach decisions as being an opportunity to develop a relationship with the client or organisational area concerned.

“Relational” was chosen as the descriptor in order to differentiate it from transactional disposition, where the intent was seen to be more on enacting the decision with less of a relationship-building emphasis. The term “relational” also had an already established meaning within the extant research, which was considered relevant to the current research program. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

Reflexive readings of the data indicated that relational disposition on the part of the study teams was closely associated with an orientation towards acting in a partnership way.

Situations where decisions inferred a partnership orientation included:
- a resolution to develop a new service with another organisational area, based on the sharing of resources
- a resolution to work with another area to address a service problem together
- a resolution to work closely with a client area to develop a new service

Interpretive readings of the data indicated that in cases involving clients and other organisational areas, partnership-based decisions had three distinctive characteristics, which stood in sharp contrast to decisions which reflected an intent to act independently. One of
these characteristics concerned the nature of the decision outcomes; one the nature of the inputs made to these decisions by team members; and the third the way this input was managed within the teams.

For the purposes of illustrating these three characteristics, the results from the examination of higher order categories of process orientation and outcome orientation had to be considered together. To facilitate this analysis, the findings about process orientation and outcome orientation have been juxtaposition in Figure 7.2. This figure depicts the pattern of team member inputs to each decision, where column 12 (entitled “Outcome”) indicates whether the final decision was based on partnering, or on acting independently. Column 13 (entitled “Alt Poss”) indicates whether the researcher considered a different type of decision was possible in the circumstances. Finally, Column 14 (entitled “Effcvnss”) identifies whether the decision was effective in terms of the team reaching consensual commitment. Column 14 data were drawn from Chapter 5, where team process orientation was examined.

A number of important conclusions were able to be made about the near-core category of relational disposition from the data at Figure 7.2. These are now discussed.

### 7.3.1 Propensity for Partnership-Based Decisions

As indicated in Chapter 6, there was a marked difference between the teams about the number of decisions which reflected a partnership, compared to an independent intent. To some extent this was to be expected, given that the teams did not address the same set of decisions over the observation period. The comparison of the proportion of decision types between the teams became more pointed, however, when only those decisions which involved clients and other organisational areas were examined. Notwithstanding that these were different decisions across the teams, it was concluded by the researcher that each of these decisions could have had an outcome which was either partnership, or independent in intent. This analysis indicated that 10 decisions taken across the four teams which had act-independently outcomes could potentially have had partnership-based outcomes.
### Chapter 7: Relational Disposition and Transactional Disposition

#### Figure 7.2 Decision Outcomes and Process Effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ldr</th>
<th>Team Members</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Alt Poss</th>
<th>Effvss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tm 1</td>
<td>Dcsn 1</td>
<td>▼ ▼</td>
<td>■ *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>▼ ▼</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>▼ ▼ ▼ ▼</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>▲ ▲ ▲ ▲</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>▲ ▲ ▲ ▲</td>
<td>■</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>▲ ▲ ▲ ▲</td>
<td>■</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>▲</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**

- ▼ ▼ Lack of consensual commitment
- * Potential for partnership outcome
- ■ Partnership outcome
- ▲ Independent outcome
- Job role defined vertically
- Job role defined mostly-vertically
- Job role defined laterally
- ▲ Partnership input
- ▼ ▼ Independent input
- ▲ Item excluded from analysis

*Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.*
For illustrative purposes, two such decisions are discussed in detail. Decision 5 of Team 1 involved a decision about arranging technological services for new senior staff before they commenced employment, in response to an identified organisational need in this area. The resolution by the team was to “bounce” the issue to the HR Department to resolve. A more partnership-based approach might have been to work together with the HR Department to resolve this issue, as it involved an area of shared responsibility.

In a second example, decision 3 of Team 4 involved a discussion about developing a business model for providing tiered data storage for client areas. This was a lengthy and difficult discussion, where members attempted to predict client behaviour in relation to choosing less expensive forms of data storage which were available commercially. A more relational approach might have involved a resolution to work together with client areas to develop a model which met the needs of clients, and was financially viable for the department.

These examples are provided to illustrate that, in reality, all decision which involved a second party could have been framed in a way which gave an overall emphasis to relationship consideration, as distinct from an emphasis on expediency.

An interesting picture emerged when a comparison was made of difference between the teams on partnership-based decision outcomes. Table 7.1 illustrates the percentage of partnership-based decisions which were made by each team, as a percentage of all potential partnership-based decisions. Because of the high correlation established in Chapter 6 between laterally defined job roles and partnership orientation by team members, Table 7.1 also compares the percentage of member job roles defined laterally within the teams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of member job roles defined laterally</th>
<th>% of partnering decisions made of all possible partnering decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Non-parametric statistical analysis indicated a positive correlation ($\rho = .95, p < .05$) between the degree of relationship emphasis in total job roles, and the propensity for partnering decisions by the teams. This correlation indicated that the higher the representation of members with laterally defined roles in these teams, the more likely the teams were to make partnering decisions.

### 7.3.2 Discussion of Partnership-Based Decisions

A further finding from this analysis was that where decision outcomes were partnering, there was a high level of difference of view within teams as to whether the outcome should in fact be partnership-based, as compared to act-independently. The extent of the level of this difference of opinion became particularly apparent through an analysis of the average margin by which total partnership-based input exceeded total act-independently input by team members. The mean score of this difference in margins favouring partnership-based input (taken across all four teams) was 1.5. This meant that the difference of perspectives favoured a partnering outcome by an average of 1.5 member inputs. Expressing this in applied terms, in most cases the decisions by teams to choose a partnership-based outcome reflected a majority view equivalent to approximately one team member’s input, on average.

However, when an examination was made of differences across the four teams on this indicator, quite a different picture emerged. In Teams 2 and 3 which had a higher percentage of team members with laterally defined job roles, the mean margin by which partnering exceeded independent input was 1.7 and 1.8 respectively - on average, a margin of approximately two member views. Conversely, this margin declined to 1.2 for Team 1, which had only 30% of members with laterally defined roles.

More important still, was the fact that for Team 4, with only 20% of members who had laterally defined roles, this figure reduced dramatically to 0.33. Indeed, the data at Table 7.1 suggests that the sole member in Team 4 with a laterally defined role was not able to influence a single decision to a partnership-based outcome, notwithstanding the strong level of dissent behaviour on this member’s part, which was noted in the discussion of this issue in Chapter 5.
7.3.3 Member Job Roles and Partnership-Based Decisions

The comparison of member job roles, and differences in average input margins, is set out at Table 7.2. The positive correlation ($\rho = .92, p < .05$) between the degree of relationship emphasis in total job roles and the predominance of partnership over independent intent by members indicated that the higher the representation of members with laterally defined roles, the stronger the arguments were made for a partnership-based outcome over an act-independently outcome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>% of member job roles defined laterally</th>
<th>average margin of partnership over independent intent in inputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This finding was consistent with the strong correlations found in Chapter 6 between underlying job role and decision orientation, namely lateral with partnering; and vertical with independent.

An interesting finding in Chapter 6 was the pattern of input provided by members with job roles defined as “mostly-vertical”. These were roles which were quite functionally based, but where there was considerable potential for partnering approaches in the way the occupants did the jobs. In effect, occupants could behave either in a partnering or an independent way in these roles. A high degree of correlation was found between these roles and input which was based on acting independently towards clients and other organisational areas. This finding suggested that, in effect, members with “mostly-vertical” roles acted similarly during discussions to members with very vertical role definitions. This dynamic implied there was potential for input imbalance in team discussions, if there was role imbalance between team members. The observed behaviour of the “mostly-vertical” role cohort is developed further in Section 7.5, which examines the near-core category of transactional disposition.
7.3.4 Team Processes and Partnership-Based Decisions

The fourth important finding about the near-core category of relational disposition was that where decisions were partnership-based, there was a very high incidence of effective decision processes. This was identified by the frequency with which teams reached member consensual commitment to decisions. Only one of a total of seven observed instances of lack of consensual commitment was associated with a partnership-based decision. This finding indicated a strong positive correlation (\(\rho=1.00, p<.01\)) between partnership based decisions, and member consensual commitment to these decisions.

7.3.5 Quality of Partnership-Based Decisions

The final important finding relating to consensual commitment was that leaders with more transformational styles, who placed greater emphasis on relationship issues, achieved a much higher incidence of consensual commitment in relation to team decisions. In this regard, a strong negative correlation (\(\rho=-.62, p<.01\)) was found between relationship emphasis in leadership style, and lack of consensual commitment.

This dynamic indicated that partnership-based decisions were of a high quality, based on both the measures of both process and outcome effectiveness set out in Chapters 5 and 6. Where decision outcomes were partnering in nature, there was an indication of strong underlying difference of opinion about what the decision outcome should have been. When seen in the context of the very high incidence of consensual commitment reached around these decisions, this indicated that very effective team processes were present during these discussions. This conclusion is based on the fact that the process of discussion and consideration appeared to have transformed what was a potentially high disharmony of interest situation, into one where members reached consensus about, and were committed to decision outcomes.

It was concluded, therefore, that partnership-based decisions were treated with a particularly strong degree of processual rigour by the teams. A possible explanation for this was that when
teams made partnering decisions, by their nature the decisions involved a higher level of commitment to a client or another work area, than a decision which involved acting independently. In other words, the stakes were arguably higher in partnership decisions than independent, because in independent decisions the implied relationship was more “arms length”. For this reason, there would seem to have been a higher emotional content when teams were seeking to establish a partnership-based dynamic with another area. Therefore, it could be argued that a higher level of member contribution would be expected during such discussions, as well as strong differences of view about the details of the final decision outcomes, which had to be resolved within the teams.

Taking an applied view of this finding, because of the higher stakes involved, it was likely these decisions would be comprehensively worked through in a way which members were able to express their differences of view, and have these processed by the team to a situation where consensual commitment was reached. Clearly, where a decision involved the building of a longer term relationship with another party/parties, it was very much in a team leader’s interest to ensure there was consensus, and commitment to follow through. It could be argued that partnerships won’t work effectively with half-hearted commitment, and this was a probable explanation for the fact that partnership-based decisions had a high level of processual rigour, in order to develop member consensual commitment.

### 7.3.6 Implications of Partnership-Based Decisions

Because of the observed attention to ensuring consensual commitment about partnership-based decisions, and the level of debate which occurred within the teams around these decisions, it was concluded that teams invested considerable energy and commitment to relationship considerations, when acting in a partnership way. The strength of the statistical correlations indicated that emphasis on relationships on the part of leaders and team members was an important factor in teams having an overriding orientation towards partnership-based decision-making.
Because of this emphasis on relationships, it was evident that teams which showed a high partnership orientation in decision-making were indicating a particular disposition towards clients and the organisational community. In the current research program, this disposition was categorised as “relational”, reflecting the intent to build exchange networks which had an emphasis on relationship considerations. “Relational” was considered to be an appropriate descriptor because of its having a meaning within the research on exchange networks (Lincoln, 1982).

Team leaders and team members were interviewed to confirm the researcher’s conclusion about the teams having a particular disposition towards larger network-building considerations, when they made partnership-based decisions. These interviews lent support to the conclusion about teams having a relational disposition in these cases. Interview findings are discussed at length in Chapter 8, which outlines the basic social process of Dyadic Decision-Making which emerged from the current research program.

### 7.3.7 Relational Disposition - Conclusion

In conclusion, four distinctive qualitative findings emerged from the analysis of team behaviours when teams showed a relational disposition in decision-making. These findings were supported by non-parametric data analysis, and were:

- a strong relationship \( (\rho = .95, p < .05) \) between the degree of relationship emphasis in total job roles, and the propensity for partnership decisions by teams
- a strong relationship \( (\rho = .92, p < .05) \) between the degree of relationship emphasis in total job roles and the predominance of partnership over independent intent among members
- a strong relationship \( (\rho = 1.00, p < .01) \) between partnership-based decisions, and high levels of member consensual commitment
- a strong negative relationship \( (\rho = -.62, p < .01) \) between relationship emphasis in leadership style, and lack of consensual commitment to decisions
In summary, where teams showed a relational disposition, there was a predominance of relationship emphasis in both leadership styles and team member job roles. These decisions were usually highly contested within the teams, and there was a high degree of emphasis on effectively negotiating different points of view to achieve consensual commitment about decisions. The imputation was that partnership-based decisions reflected a very constructive team decision-making dynamic, with high emphasis on relationship considerations, both within the team and with clients and other organisational units.

It was concluded from these findings that when teams showed a marked disposition towards partnership-based decisions, they were in fact reflecting a high level of commitment to relationship-building. This was reflected both in their intent about the way they engaged with clients and other organisational areas, and also about the way the teams dealt with their internal processes to develop consensual commitment. Because of these dual emphases on relationship aspects, teams were seen as showing a relational disposition when they made a predominance of partnership-based decisions.

The justification for identifying the near-core category of *relational disposition* lay in the distinctive pattern of correlations which emerged in the data analysis process. The characteristics of the near-core category of *transactional disposition* are now explored.


\textbf{7.4 TRANSACTIONAL DISPOSITION}

The second near-core category which arose from this research study related to the teams having a disposition to make decisions which were distinctively transactional in nature.

In this context, “transactional” indicated a disposition to enact a decision in a way which resolved an issue in the most expedient way possible. In particular, transactional disposition inferred a limited intention to see the decision as an opportunity to develop a partnership-like relationship with the relevant client or organisational area, as was the case where teams showed a relational disposition.

“Transactional” was also chosen as a descriptor because it had a particular connotation in the extant research, which was relevant to the current research program. This is discussed in Chapter 8.

Reflexive readings of the data indicated that transactional disposition was closely associated with teams having an orientation towards acting in an independent, rather than a partnership way, towards clients and other organisational areas. Situations where decisions inferred an act-independently orientation included:

- a resolution to refer a joint service problem to another organisational area to resolve
- a resolution to develop a new service, without consultation with potential users of the service
- a resolution to refuse a request from a client, based on existing policy/ guidelines, without considering alternative solutions
Interpretive readings of the data indicated that where teams showed an act-independently intent, there were distinctive characteristics present, and these stood in clear contrast to decisions which reflected a partnership-based intent. As in the analysis of the higher order category of relational disposition, these distinctive features related to the propensity for teams to make act-independently decisions; the nature of member input during these decisions; and the way in which member input was managed within the teams.

Using the same set of indicators established in Section 7.4 and reflected in Figure 7.2, some important findings emerged in situations where the teams showed a propensity to act independently in decision-making. These are now discussed.

### 7.4.1 Propensity for Act-Independently Decisions

There was a marked difference between the team in terms of their propensity to make decisions to act independently. Table 7.3 illustrates the percentage of this type of decision which was made by each team, expressed as a percentage of all decisions involving clients and other organisational areas. Table 7.3 also illustrates the percentage on members in each team whose job roles had lower emphasis on relationships. These were jobs with vertical and mostly-vertical job role definitions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>% of member job roles defined vert/mostly-vert</th>
<th>% of act-independently decisions made of all decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of decision outcomes indicated a marked difference between the teams in terms of their propensity for act-independently decisions. As was the case with a propensity for partnership-based decisions, this phenomenon is now analysed further with a view to understanding the dynamics involved.
7.4.2 Member Job Roles and Act-Independently Decisions

As indicated in Section 7.3, non-parametric statistical analysis indicated a positive correlation ($\rho=.95$, $p<.05$) between the degree of relationship emphasis in total job roles, and the propensity for partnering decisions by the teams. This correlation indicated that the higher the representation of members with vertically defined roles in these teams, the more likely the teams were to make independent decisions.

7.4.3 Discussion of Act-Independently Decisions

The second important finding was the margin by which independently oriented input exceeded partnership oriented input when decisions were to act independently. The mean of all margin differences across the teams on this indicator was 2.4, compared to 1.5 when decision outcomes were based on partnering. This meant that for decisions to act independently, there was, on average, at least 2 members more who argued for this outcome over the number of members who argued for a partnering outcome. However, unlike with partnership-based decisions, when individual team data were analysed, no correlation could be found between these variables across the teams.

While this result stood in clear contrast to behaviours which were present when the teams made partnership-based decisions (discussed in Section 7.4), the explanation for this became clear when an examination was made of the way in which the teams processed decisions which were to act independently.

7.4.4 Team Processes and Act-Independently Decisions

It was noted that of the observed instances of team process ineffectiveness - as defined by lack of consensual commitment to decisions - seven of the eight instances involved decisions to act in an independent way. This finding represented a positive correlation ($\rho=.83$, $p<.05$)
between decisions to act independently, and lack of member consensual commitment around decision outcomes.

When the five cases of lack of consensual commitment which involved clients and other organisational areas were examined further, it was found that 4 of these 5 cases were in the two teams where the leaders had lower relationship emphasis in their leadership style, and team members had lower relationship emphasis in their job roles.

Moreover, in these 4 cases, the nature of the residual lack of consensus related to whether, in fact, the outcome should have been to act independently or act in a partnering way. Examples of these included one case relating to client surveys, where the team did not fully consider a dissenting member’s view that the extent of inter-departmental collaboration should also be tested by the survey instrument. The dissenter expressed the view there was evidence the division did not have good cross-departmental relationships, and that this should be addressed in the survey. In another example involving the implementation of a new technological quality assurance system, two team members harboured concerns about ensuring the implementation was done in a way which engaged staff. However, their views were observed not to have been fully considered by the team, because of a concentration on technical aspects.

It was also apparent that where there was lack of consensual commitment to decisions to act independently, there had been a failure of team processes during discussions. In the five specific cases involved, the failure of team processes related to:

- a minority dissenting member was intimidated by another member, and withdrew from the discussion
- a team leader made their intentions clear about the decision before the discussion commenced
- a team leader terminated the discussion before a dissenting member’s concerns could be fully discussed and processed
- a team member’s proposal was subjected to ridicule by other team members
- a discussion was terminated by a team leader before disagreement between two members was resolved
The pattern in the team behaviours suggested a consistent dynamic that, when there was a majority argument from members favouring a decision to act independently, there was less attention to effective team processes. A probable explanation for this was that decisions to act independently towards clients or other organisational areas tended not to have the same degree of emotional investment and commitment than partnering decisions. For this reason, the detail of these types of decisions could be seen as comparatively less important than in the case of partnering decisions.

This dynamic may have explained the fact that the teams did not make the same investment in reaching member consensual commitment with act-independently decisions as they did with partnering decisions. This conclusion is consistent with the fact that the mean margin of the difference between member inputs was only 1.5 for partnering decisions, whereas it was 2.4 for act-independently decisions. This difference indicated a higher propensity for simple weight of argument to carry the day in decisions to act independently. This sort of dynamic, where groups take the line of least resistance in the face of majority argument, is well identified in the extant research on process loss within teams (Janis, 1972).

### 7.4.5 Quality of Act-Independently Decisions

The pattern of team outcomes and processes suggested the presence of a consistent dynamic, whereby a majority position from members favouring a decision to act independently involved less attention to quality considerations.

Because of the observed lack of attention to ensuring consensual commitment about act-independently decisions, and the limited level of debate which occurred within the teams around these decisions, it was concluded that teams invested less energy and commitment to decision-making processes when acting in an independent way. The strength of the correlations indicates that emphasis on relationships on the part of leaders and team members was not a key factor when teams had an overriding orientation towards decisions based on acting independently.
7.4.6 Implications of Act-Independently Decisions

Because of the lack of emphasis on relationships, it was concluded that teams which showed an act-independently orientation in decision-making were indicating a particular disposition towards client and the organisational community. This disposition was categorised as “transactional”, which reflected the intent to enact exchanges with clients and other organisational areas in a more transaction-like way. “Transactional” was considered to be an appropriate descriptor because of its having an already established meaning within the research about exchange networks (Lincoln, 1982).

Team leaders and team members were interviewed to confirm the researcher’s conclusion about the particular disposition towards larger network-building considerations, when teams made decisions based on acting independently. These interviews lent support to the conclusion about teams having a transactional disposition in these cases. Interview findings are discussed at length in Chapter 8, which outlines the basic social process of Dyadic Decision-Making which emerged from the current research program.

7.4.7 Transactional Disposition - Conclusion

In conclusion, two distinctive qualitative findings emerged from the analysis of team behaviours when teams showed a transactional disposition in decision-making. These findings were supported by non-parametric data analysis, and were:

- a strong relationship ($\rho=.83$, $p<.01$) between act-independently decisions, and lack of member consensual commitment to decisions
- a strong relationship ($\rho=1.00$, $p<.01$) between lack of consensual commitment to decisions, and process failure during discussions

The foregoing analysis indicated that, where teams showed an overall transactional disposition towards clients and other organisational areas, there were distinctive characteristics present.
In particular, there was a predominance of low relationship emphases in leadership styles, as well as team members with low relationship emphases in their job roles. Teams also paid much less attention to effective team processes to reach consensual commitment to decisions. The imputation of this pattern was a team decision-making dynamic with a low emphasis on relationship considerations, compared to teams which showed a relational disposition.

It was concluded from these findings that, when teams showed a marked disposition towards decisions to act independently rather than to partner with clients and other organisational areas, they were in fact reflecting low levels of commitment to relationship-building. This was apparent both in their intent about the way they engaged with clients and other organisational areas, and also about the way the teams dealt with internal processes for developing consensual commitment. Because of this dual lack of emphasis on relationship aspects, teams were seen as showing a transactional disposition when they made a predominance of decisions to act independently.

The justification for identifying the near-core category of *transactional disposition* lay in the distinctive pattern of correlations which emerged through the data analysis process.

The examination of the near-core categories of *relational disposition* and *transactional disposition* pointed to a number of key differences in team behaviour between when teams made decisions to act in a partnership way, compared to an independent way, towards clients and other organisational areas. The current research program indicates that these near-core categories reflected distinctively different combinations of characteristics which were identified within the higher order categories of *team process orientation* and *team outcome orientation*.

While these differences were significant in themselves, before they could be further developed in grounded theory terms, it was considered necessary to examine some other contextual differences between the teams which emerged during the data collection and analysis process, as these contextual differences had the potential to be influencing factors in the findings noted.
7.5 OTHER POTENTIAL INFLUENCING FACTORS

In qualitative research, the question of other potential influencing factors is important because there is inherently less of an emphasis on empirical measurement of phenomena and their relationships in the research methodology.

Perhaps the most interesting difference between the teams on the question of their disposition in decision-making was the fact that Team 2 made a partnership-based decision in every situation where the decision involved a client or another organisational area. By contrast, all other teams made a mixture of decisions to partner as well as to act independently.

The following is a summary of team decision outcomes in this regard:

- Team 1: partnership-based outcomes in 3 of a potential 8 decisions (i.e. 38%)
- Team 3: partnership-based outcomes in 6 of a potential 7 decisions (i.e. 85%)
- Team 4: partnership-based outcomes in 3 of a potential 7 decisions (i.e. 43%)

From these performance data, it could be seen that in terms of making partnership-based decisions, there was a very similar (low) result for Teams 1 and 4, whereas Teams 2 and 3 made substantially more of these types of decisions. This pattern was considered worthy of further analysis as to whether there were other potential factors which contributed to this result.

During confidential interviews, team leaders identified various factors which may have impacted on the dynamics within their teams, as well as team outcomes. For instance one team leader commented on the gender composition of their team being almost exclusively female, “I believe this is one of the highlighted differences between the traditional technologist and the (profession). And maybe it’s a reflection of the gender balance. Look at my management team and it’s rare to see a male.” [data, Team 2]

Another leader commented on the fact that team members had worked together for a long time, and were all from the same profession, “They’ve all been working together for a long time so they have a degree of ease and familiarity and casualness”, and “… they’re all in the
same profession and there is a degree of understanding across all the issues, which is mutual.” [data, Team 3]

Another team leader commented on underlying culture, indicating a wish to reflect more of the language and culture of other areas within their team. This team leader commented that they planned to “… deliberately spend more time with (name), and construct more opportunities to take on her language and cultural approach to things. Not in a superficial way, but actually comprehend what she meant by some of these things, in order to relay that context more to the management team.” The same leader commented that a number of their team members had “… been promoted for technology seniority type reasons, rather than for expertise managerially …” [data, Team 1]

One leader commented on differences between the departments in the study which were associated with different underlying organisational roles, “I think it’s to do with background - the traditional approach to things that people have taken. The (discipline) has relied on collaboration in order to work for centuries.” [data, Team 2]

Based on these comments by team leaders and on data from team observations, a qualitatively-based examination was undertaken of the following factors, to ascertain their potential contribution to differences between the teams, in terms of processes and outcomes:

- differences in membership demography between the teams, including experience levels and gender balance
- differences in diversity of team member roles within the teams
- differences in underlying organisational roles for the teams themselves
- differences in cultural settings between the teams

7.5.1 Membership Diversity

In terms of team demographics, the contextual reference point data indicated that the teams had similar levels of diversity in terms of member age, and ethnicity. The specific diversity
issues of experience and gender which were identified by the team leaders were, therefore, explored further.

7.5.1.1 Team Experience Profiles

While there was a difference in experience profiles between the teams, all teams had a leader with at least 5 years experience in their current role, and at least 80% of members with more than 3 years experience in their current roles (with most team members having more than 5 years experience). The purpose in examining the length of leader and member experience in their current roles was to ascertain whether there was the potential for a situation of enhanced dependency, either by an inexperienced leader on team members, or by inexperienced team members on the leader. The demographic data on team member experience in their roles appears at Table 7.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Leader more than 5 years in current role</th>
<th>Leader less than 5 years in current role</th>
<th>Members more than 5 years in current role</th>
<th>Members with 3-5 years in current role</th>
<th>Member less than 3 years in current role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The extant literature suggests that significant differences in experience levels can create dependency dynamics, as well as uneven commitment within teams, which lead to process loss (Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). However, the demographic data suggested that team leaders and members had been sufficiently experienced and settled within their roles for this not to have been a significant consideration in determining team processes and outcomes.

7.5.1.2 Team Gender Profiles

In terms of gender composition, Teams 2 and 3, while led by a male and female respectively, had a predominance of female representation in their team membership (75% and 89%
respectively). By contract, Teams 1 and 4 were both led by males, and had a predominance of male representation in their team membership (90% and 100% respectively). Table 7.5 depicts these gender differences.

### TABLE 7.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male Leader</th>
<th>Female Leader</th>
<th>Male Members</th>
<th>Female Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a body of research which suggests females may be more likely to seek partnership-based outcomes than males, in accordance with gender specific preferred negotiation styles (Eagly et al., 2003). Based on this extant research, where there was a marked predominance of either female members or male members, it might have been expected that gender balance would be a factor in team processes and outcomes.

However, when team process and outcome data were further analysed, the observed behaviour of team members did not support this proposition. Table 7.6 depicts the percentage of intent displayed by males and females which was partnering, compared to independent in nature, and breaks this down by job role.

A comparison was conducted of the extent to which male and female input differed in general, and differed according to job roles. No correlation was found between female gender and partnership-based intent. However, a strong positive correlation was found between females in lateral roles and partnership-based intent ($\rho=0.41$, $p<0.05$).
TABLE 7.6
Intent by Gender Type by Job Role
(\% of total inputs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vertical Role + % of Intent Partnering</th>
<th>Vertical Role + % of Intent Partnering</th>
<th>Lateral Role + % of Intent Independent</th>
<th>Lateral Role + % of Intent Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Teams:</strong></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Teams:</strong></td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparable picture emerged for male team members. There was found to be no strong correlation between males and independent intent. However, for males in vertically defined roles there was a strong positive correlation ($\rho=.38$, p<.05) with independent intent.

Therefore, gender was found not to correlate with intent overall, indicating that females did not inherently favour partnership-based intent, nor males inherently favour acting independently. This was an interesting finding, in view of the fact that the gender imbalances between the teams arguably created the optimum conditions for this phenomenon to have occurred, had it been likely to. By contrast, a strong correlation was found between females in laterally defined roles and partnering intent; and between males in vertically defined roles and independent intent. These findings indicated that job role combined with gender did define member behaviour in a marked way, whereas gender of itself did not.

The findings about gender significance were also consistent with the fact that Teams 3 and 4 had similar incidences of unresolved dissent and lack of consensus. Team 3 was predominantly female, with a female leader, and Team 4 predominantly male, with a male leader. Had overall gender composition within teams been an important factor, the combination of a female leader, with predominantly female team membership in Team 3
might have been expected to result in that team having a much lower incidence of unresolved dissent, and lack of consensus. However, the empirical data discussed in Chapter 5 indicated this was not the case.

It was therefore concluded that the pattern of correlations did not support the proposition that gender mix was as important a factor in the processes and outcomes of the teams as the factors outlined in Sections 7.3 and 7.4, which were found to have strong correlations.

### 7.5.2 Job Role Diversity

The extant research in job role diversity by Van de Ven (1986) and Michie et al. (2002) established that the greater the functional heterogeneity in individual job roles, the more likely it was that team members would work together collaboratively and cohesively. Job role diversity was thought, therefore, to be a factor which might contribute to higher or lower partnering behaviour by the teams.

Three of the four teams had fairly narrowly defined organisational roles, which involved provision of service infrastructure to the institutions. An examination of the roles individual members had within these teams indicated a fairly consistent central core of responsibilities, which permeated all of these roles. The roles of members in these teams (Teams 1, 3 and 4) are set out at Table 7.7.

Team 2 differed from the other teams, in terms of the spread of member roles and responsibilities, which was found to be much more diverse. The gatekeeper for the study, as well as the team leader and a number of team members, indicated that because of this, the team had struggled for some time during its formative years to establish a common set of goals. By contrast, this team was found to be the most cohesive during the study, in terms of achieving partnership-based outcomes, as well as consensual commitment. The range of job roles for Team 2 is also set out at Table 7.7.
### TABLE 7.7
Job Roles Within Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Functional Responsibilities of Team Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Team 1     | Provision of underlying infrastructure architecture  
            | Provision of underlying infrastructure applications  
            | Provision of communications capability (2 members)  
            | Provision of infrastructure support service  
            | Provision of project management services  
            | Provision of specialist infrastructure for research  
            | Provision of client support services  
            | Provision of quality control services  
| Team 2     | Provision of professional training services  
            | Provision of audio visual support services  
            | Provision of information desk services  
            | Provision of library services  
            | Provision of printing and copying  
            | Provision of disabled services  
            | Provision of services for particular client groups  
| Team 3     | Provision of campus based services (3 members)  
            | Provision of specialist discipline based services  
            | Acquisition and management of specialist infrastructure  
            | Management of specialist infrastructure & services  
            | Management of service quality and staff development  
            | Provision of underlying infrastructure  
| Team 4     | Provision of underlying infrastructure architecture  
            | Provision of underlying infrastructure applications  
            | Provision of communications capability  
            | Provision of infrastructure support services  
            | Provision of specialist infrastructure for research  

The analysis of the comparative levels of job role heterogeneity between the teams would seem to discount member role diversity as a contributing factor to team outcomes. Indeed, the analysis would suggest that of all the teams, Team 2 would have had the pre-condition factors which militated against reaching consensual commitment. In fact, this team was found to have the most positive result on this indicator.
7.5.3 Underlying Organisational Roles

While Section 7.5.2 established that the teams were quite specifically focused in their underlying organisational roles, there was a difference in one important respect.

Two of the teams were responsible for provision of primarily technologically related infrastructure and services; one team for primarily non-technologically related infrastructure and services; and one team for direct client contact and support. It might be argued that these underlying roles could have been categorised qualitatively in terms of their “hardness’ and “softness”. For example, provision of technologically related services could be seen as a comparatively one-dimensional role, in that it involved ensuring a technical and functional capability for the organisation. By contrast, non-technologically related services would seem to be more multi-dimensional, in that this involved provision of tangible resources, virtual resources, and direct client assistance and support in using these resources. Finally, it could be argued that the team providing front line services was the most multi-dimensional in terms of the diverse range of services involved, and the attendant complexity involved in meeting client needs.

This argument may have partly explained the fact the two technologically focused teams (Teams 1 and 4) placed more emphasis on act-independently decisions. This would have been consistent with the relatively one-dimensional nature of their underlying organisational role. It is instructive, however, that when interviewed by the researcher, leaders and members of Teams 1 and 4 identified the importance of partnership-building to be effective. During individual interviews, one of these team leaders commented in relation to the team that, “I’d like it to be a bit more … a bit more constructive in the way it connects externally … we have to do more of that stuff … actually have a deliberate engagement”. This leader reflected on a fellow department with an associated service responsibility, indicating that there was a need to do more “… to further the relationship-building between the two departments”. [data, Team 1]

The other team leader from the technological department made similar observations when asked about the importance of partnership building when they replied, “It (the department)
absolutely needs to build strong linkages and partnerships within and without. Now for some of the elements, those relationships are inward facing, and some more outward facing … So if you don’t have a client you’re working for somebody with a client.” [data, Team 4]

In conclusion, while there was a prima-facie argument that the underlying organisational roles of Teams 1 and 4 would have encouraged them to act independently in decision-making, there was a clear belief on the part of team leaders and members that these teams needed to act in a partnership way to be effective. This finding would suggest, on balance, that there should have been at least as strong a compulsion within these teams to act in a partnering way as there was for Teams 2 and 3.

The examination of team behaviours in the context of organisational roles tends to discount underlying organisational role as an important factor in team decision outcomes. However, with Team 1 underlying organisational role may have combined with the team leader’s highly transactional style as a factor in this team making the fewest partnership-based decisions. Somewhat countering this argument was the fact that Team 1 is part of an organisation with a highly federated partnership approach to management of the technological services in question, and this particular team leader chairs a collaborative forum involving senior managers across the institution, whose role is to build strong partnership-based paradigms.

In summary, it was concluded there was not a strong case that underlying organisational role was a factor in team decision outcomes which was more important than the factors identified in the current research program as having statistical significance.

7.5.4 Underlying Departmental Culture

While there was no formal exercise undertaken in this study to identify the cultural characteristics of each of the teams, there were some interesting pointers in the literature about potential cultural differences.
Radcliff (2000) identified that technologically focused departments tend to face a cultural challenge associated with changing their focus from technical competence, to learning and service delivery. Hays (1997) similarly described a need for such departments to be less technically focused, and pay greater attention to the interface between their personnel and the users of products and services. The extant literature suggested that technologically focused entities tend to inherently have transactional cultures, contributed to in no small part by their emphasis on employing contract workers. These entities also tend to be in male dominated industry, with a perception of a strong glass ceiling for women in respect of senior managerial roles (McGee, 2005; Pantelli et al., 1999). The predominance of males in senior managerial positions may further foster transactional cultures within these entities.

Comments by the gatekeepers to the study confirmed that shifting focus towards client service had been a continuing challenge for both of the technologically focused departments in the study, though both gatekeepers also noted the considerable progress in this area which had been made by the relevant team leaders over the preceding five years.

The extant literature indicated, by contrast, that more professionally focused entities were increasingly operating in collaborative and partnership modes in their areas of responsibility (McCrorry & Russell, 2005). The profession in question in this study is also female dominated. The combination of these circumstances might have meant that, just as the technologically focused departments could be argued to have inherently more act-independently cultures, the professional department could be argued as having a more partnership-based culture. The gatekeeper to the study indicated that in respect of the professional team in this study, while he thought it had quite a good collaborative focus, the need for more embedded and consistent collaborative approaches had been a continuing area for attention.

The fourth team in the study was made up of front line service areas, in a department newly created by one of the gatekeepers to the study some five years previously, following a divisional restructure. The gatekeeper indicated that the reason for creating the department was to bring front line client service areas together under one management stream, in order to
foster more seamless service provision. Moreover, the current team leader had been recruited specifically to head this new department. In this scenario, it could have been argued that this team had potentially the strongest underlying cultural settings for partnership-building, notwithstanding the indication that the team had struggled for some time initially after its formation to identify a set of common goals.

In summary, if the teams were to be thought of as different industries within the same organisation, there would appear to have been an argument that underlying cultural differences would have had an effect on whether the teams favoured partnering, compared to independent decision outcomes. While this was an interesting proposition, it was contradicted by the fact that the leaders of both teams with inherently transactional cultures indicated they understood the importance of collaboration and partnership-building to the success and effectiveness of their departments.

The fact that both these teams showed a mixture of partnering as well as independent intent in their decision-making was taken to indicate that decision-making was essentially an act of free choice, notwithstanding that underlying cultural settings in these teams may have created a potential leaning towards independent intent. This conclusion tends to be supported by the fact that for Team 3, which could be argued to have had an inherently collaborative culture, 40% of observed decision outcomes indicated an intention to act independently.

In summary, underlying organisational culture was seen to be a possible factor affecting the pattern of decision outcomes between the teams, but not a key one.

7.5.5 Other Potential Influencing Factors - Conclusion

In conclusion, while the impact of the other potential influencing factors cited could not be comprehensively assessed empirically within the current research program’s design, a qualitatively-based analysis of the impact of these factors suggested they may have played a minor role in the findings. However, the qualitative analysis showed that, in most cases, the presence of these factors had an influence which was contrary to what the extant research
suggested. This dynamic was taken to indicate that these factors should not be accorded as much weight as those which were found to have statistical significance.

Notwithstanding this conclusion, it was considered that factors relating to team demographics; underlying organisational role; and team culture - when considered together, and in combination - may have influenced teams to be pre-disposed to act either relationally ortransactionally. In this sense, these factors were not discounted altogether. The importance of other potential influencing factors is returned to for further development in Chapter 8, which discusses the basic social process of Dyadic Decision-Making which arose from the current research program.

7.6 NEAR-CORE CATEGORIES OF RELATIONAL & TRANSACTIONAL DISPOSITION - CONCLUSION

Reflexive readings of the data which emerged in the current research program indicated that top level teams could be identified as having either a relational or a transactional disposition, when it came to making decisions.

This phenomenon was identified by the presence of two near-core categories in the data. These core categories encapsulated the distinctive way the teams integrated behaviours from the higher order categories when they acted relationally, compared to when they acted transactionally. The higher order categories referred to were team process orientation and team outcome orientation, which were discussed at Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.
While all teams were identified as acting in either a partnership-based or independent way on individual decisions, the current research program indicated that all teams favoured an overall disposition in their patterns of behaviour, which was to act either relationally or transactionally. Table 7.8 depicts in summary form the differences found to be qualitatively important when the teams exhibit a markedly stronger inclination towards either a relational or a transactional disposition in their decision-making.

The conclusions about these differences in characteristics were supported by the presence of statistical correlations with a significance factor of p<0.05, or greater. These statistical relationships and correlations were outlined and discussed in detail at Sections 7.3 and 7.4.

**TABLE 7.8**

**Relational vis-a-vis Transactional Disposition - Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relational Disposition</th>
<th>Transactional Disposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- a higher relationship emphasis in team leader leadership style</td>
<td>- a lower relationship emphasis in team leader leadership style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher relationship emphasis in team member job roles</td>
<td>- a lower relationship emphasis in team member job roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher propensity for member input oriented towards acting in a partnership way towards clients</td>
<td>- a higher propensity for member input oriented towards acting independently towards clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher level of member disagreement/dissent about decision outcomes</td>
<td>- a lower level of member disagreement/dissent about decision outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher emphasis on team process effectiveness to resolve disagreement/dissent</td>
<td>- a lower emphasis on team process effectiveness to resolve disagreement/dissent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher incidence of member consensual commitment in relation to decisions</td>
<td>- a lower incidence of member consensual commitment in relation to decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comprehensive suite of other factors which could potentially have influenced teams to act relationally, compared to transactionally was analysed qualitatively, in the context of the extant literature and the data developed from the current research program. A number of these factors were thought potentially to play some role in influencing the differences in disposition identified between the teams. However, none was concluded to have played a role of comparable importance to the characteristics identified at Table 7.8, which were shown to...
have a qualitatively important relationship, and strong levels of correlation. Notwithstanding this fact, the role of these other potential factors - when operating in combination - was considered to be worthy of further reflection in the context of the current research program. This dynamic is discussed in Chapter 8.

Arguably, the most important conclusion from the data analysis about these near-core categories was the indication that they had an embedded character, as illustrated by the distinctive patterns and linkages which were identified between their characteristics. These embedded patterns suggested that the near-core categories of relational disposition and transactional disposition were two parts of a core category, representing a phenomenon which occurred at a higher level of abstraction. This core category was found to represent a basic social process which occurred in the behaviour of the top level teams in the study.
CHAPTER 8

DYADIC DECISION-MAKING:
A CORE CATEGORY AND BASIC SOCIAL
PROCESS OF TOP LEVEL TEAM BEHAVIOUR

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The current program of research identified two distinctively different phenomena which were present when top management teams made decisions. These phenomena related to the disposition of the teams in their decision-making, and were identified as *relational disposition* and *transactional disposition*. The analysis at Chapter 7 described how, when the overall disposition of teams in decision-making was predominantly relational or predominantly transactional, there were distinctive process and outcome characteristics present. *Team process orientation* and *team outcome orientation* were higher order categories which emerged during this study, and were discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

Because of the distinctively different nature of their characteristics, *relational disposition* and *transactional disposition* were identified as specific categories of top level team behaviour in the current research program. Furthermore, their degree of distinctiveness suggested they were, in fact, two parts of a core category, which occurred at the highest level of abstraction. This core category is *dyadic decision-making*.

Identification of a core category is a central element of qualitative research, as it signifies the presence of a basic social process within the phenomena being studied. In fact, identification of a basic social process can be viewed as the ultimate purpose of grounded theory-based research (Glaser, 1992).
The presence of a basic social process of dyadic decision-making inferred that when the study teams displayed a disposition towards either relational or transactional behaviour, they were in effect, fostering the development of a particular type of relationship “dyad” between themselves and their clients, or other organisational areas. The indication in the current research program that top level teams fostered the development of relationship dyads through their decision-making activity was important, in that it signified one of the key ways, in practice, that organisational units built relationship networks with each other.

The importance of networks for organisational success is well established in the extant research (Limerick et al., 2002). However the research into network development in an applied sense has been limited to date, and many researchers have pointed to the need for much greater understanding of how networks form, develop and un-form within real-life organisational settings (Walker et al., 2000). In organisational adaptation terms, the findings about this basic social process are particularly important, because of the argument that the pattern of relationship dyads developed across an organisation will influence how cohesively an organisation adapts to changes in its environment. This proposition is developed more fully in Chapter 9, and is identified as an area for further research study.

The core category of dyadic decision-making is reflected in Figure 8.1, which represents the framework of categories which emerged through the data collection and analysis process. The componentry for the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making was drawn from the qualitative relationships within, and between these categories which were supported by strong correlations. The core category discussed in this chapter was generated by the grounded theory approach outlined in Part 2.

The core category of dyadic decision-making emerged from reflexive readings of the data. Using this particular data analysis process, an understanding was developed of the dynamics which were present when teams displayed an overall decision-making disposition which was either relational or transactional.
There were two overwhelming factors which signified that a basic social process was present in the data, rather than the findings being a chance occurrence. The first was the fact that all four teams showed a marked inclination towards one type of disposition over the other, namely either relational or transactional. The second indicator was the strength with which distinctive process and outcome factors correlated with each type of disposition. Relational and transactional disposition were both associated with distinctive and embedded patterns of characteristics and relationships. This dynamic suggested the presence of a phenomenon at a very high level of abstraction. The detailed supporting arguments for this conclusion were developed through the evolving story line which emerged from the current research program. The story line represented the central thread of Chapters 5 to 7, which discussed higher order, and near-core categories of findings.
This chapter develops the core category of dyadic decision-making in detail, and proposes some contextual markers for this phenomenon within the larger setting of day to day organisational life, including its potential implications for how effectively organisations adapt to environmental change. The basic social process of dyadic decision-making is further developed in grounded theory terms in Chapter 9.

The chapter begins with an outline of some important place marker in the theory of relationship exchange in organisations. The chapter then discusses the two different types of exchange dyads found in the current research program, as well as the distinctive characteristics of each. Potential pre-disposition factors which may influence top level teams towards fostering one type of exchange dyad over the other in their decision-making activities are also canvassed.

The chapter concludes by proposing the implications of a basic social process of dyadic decision-making for broader organisational adaptation in knowledge industries, which is the particular substantive setting for the current research program.

### 8.2 THE CONCEPT OF DYADIC EXCHANGE

A fundamental precept of social exchange theory is the notion that individual actors within an organisational setting establish patterns of exchange between each other. These patterns are influenced by phenomena such as reciprocity and organisational citizenship (Cardona, Lawrence & Bentley, 2004; Bateman and Organ, 1983). This patterning dynamic can commence in a subtle way, but progressively takes on an embedded characteristic over time, as exchanges are repeated and become more multi-plex. That is to say, once a pattern of exchange is established between two organisational actors, it becomes de rigueur through repetition, and difficult to change or break.

Lincoln (1982) proposes that over time, patterns of exchange behaviour assume the form of exchange dyads. “Dyad” is a term from the physical sciences, which describes two or more
points which exchange energy between each other in a regular and predictable way. Lincoln further proposes that such dyads can be based on a simple reciprocity concept, whereby one actor responds to another actor’s overture, with an overture of like value. Alternatively, exchanges can take on a more deeply embedded character, where they create a mutual dependency or symbiotic-like dynamic between the actors.

The concept of exchange dyads was considered to be of interest for the current research program because of the distinctive patterns which emerged in the data analysis, which signified a particular type of disposition within the decision-making behaviour of each of the teams. Moreover, the two types of disposition which emerged in this research had parallels with Lincoln’s (1982) research about exchange dyads at the individual actor level. Relational disposition is not unlike Lincoln’s mutual dependency exchange dynamic, and transactional disposition has similarities with Lincoln’s simple reciprocity exchange dynamic.

A number of fundamental indications arose from the findings about exchange in the current research program. The first was the indication that just as individual organisational actors establish dyadic patterns in the way they interact over time, so too do organisational units establish comparable patterns conceptually in their exchange relationships. A second indication was that decision-making behaviour was an important influence in creating exchange dyads. A proposition which also arose from the research findings was that there were factors which caused organisational units to be pre-disposed towards decision-making behaviour which contributed to the formation of one type of dyad over the other, namely either relational or transactional. These relationships are now developed further.
8.3  DYADIC DECISION-MAKING – AN EXPLORATION

Interpretive readings of the data from the current research program indicated that in decisions which involved clients and other organisational areas, there was a free-choice dynamic at play. This meant that the teams could choose to make a decision which was based on a partnership-like exchange, or one which was more arms-length and independent.

While each of the teams made some decisions based on partnership-building, and some based on acting independently, there was a marked overall tendency for teams to show either a relational or transactional disposition overall in their decision-making. The correlations outlined in Chapters 7 indicate that Teams 2 and 3 displayed a relational disposition, while Teams 1 and 4 displayed a transactional disposition.

In the debriefing sessions conducted with each team, the teams initially expressed surprise that their decision-making processes and outcomes took on an overall pattern. However, after reflecting on the data provided by the researcher, the teams accepted this was the case. Importantly, no team indicated it was a deliberate strategy to be either relational or transactional. That is, they didn’t, for instance, look at each issue and think, “how can we make a partnership-based decision?”

This phenomenon was consistent with the extant research on social exchange and exchange networks, which suggests that patterns of exchange are most often developed without conscious thought on the part of the actors involved. In human dyadic exchange, the extant research suggests it is most often a case of the exchange pattern building the dyad, rather than the desired dyad building the exchange pattern (Lincoln, 1982). In this respect, dyad creation...
in the human sciences differs from dyad creation in the physical sciences, where the nature of the dyad is deliberately constructed.

It appeared, therefore, that the study teams were unconsciously favouring one form of decision outcome over another, where they had a free-choice situation. It also became apparent that at the highest level of abstraction, team decision-making could be seen simply as a component of the larger exchange process which occurred in the day to day life of these teams. This prospect was not surprising, given the data in the current research program which indicated that the type of behaviour and orientation shown by team members within the decision team setting correlated strongly with the nature of their day to day job roles.

The extant literature establishes that organisational actors unconsciously build exchange dyads in their everyday interactions with each other (Lincoln, 1982). As organisational teams/units are simply collections of organisational actors, there is, by extension, an argument that teams/units also build exchange dyads with other organisational teams/units. In this context, the consistency of team decision-making process and outcome patterns found in the current research program was important. These patterns inferred that the study teams were (albeit unconsciously) using the decision-making process as a means of building, or reinforcing, particular types of relationship dyads between themselves and their clients, or other organisational units.

Notwithstanding that teams indicated their decision-making behaviour did not follow a deliberate strategy in terms of building either relational or transactional exchanges, there was an indication in the current research program that broader relationship considerations were present, at least at a pre-conscious level. The interviews conducted with team leaders around the issue of their disposition in decision-making, pointed to the fact that relationship-building was at least in the back of their minds. One team leader expressed a concerted view about the need to change the overall relationship dynamic with another organisational area in the comment, “I’d like it to be a bit more - ah the right form of words - a bit more constructive in the way it connects externally, and one of the suggestions we are pursuing in that regard, as an example, is the relationship between (this team) and (another team)” [data, Team 1]. In a further
comment, this team leader indicated there was not “a sophisticated enough relationship between the two areas”. [data, Team 1]

A second team leader indicated that the question of broader relationship-building was interesting, and reflected that their particular team “… absolutely needs to build strong linkages and partnerships, within and without.” [data, Team 4]

Another team leader reflected on the approach of their team to relationship building, comparing it to other areas of the division, in the comment, “… I think it’s to do with background, the traditional approach to things that people have taken. The (current department) has relied on collaboration in order to work for centuries.” [data, Team 2]

The issue of relationship considerations during decision-making is explored in more detail in Chapter 9, which examines the implications for team outcomes of team leader and team member relationship emphasis. As part of the broader discussion in Chapter 9, further specific evidence is cited to the effect that relationship considerations were important for the study teams, based on data collected during team leader and team member interviews.

A basic social process of dyadic decision-making was, therefore, identified as the core category which emerged from this research study. What is meant by dyadic decision-making is the process of building a particular type of exchange relationship dynamic with clients and other organisational areas, through significant organisational decisions.

The properties of dyadic decision-making are now explored in detail through an analysis of the two types of decision dyads which emerged in the current research program. In particular, the relationship between the core category of dyadic decision-making and the near-core categories of relational disposition and transactional disposition is discussed.
8.4 TYPES OF DECISION DYADS

The data collection and analysis process indicated that in their decision-making activities, teams assumed a predominant disposition which could be categorised as either relational or transactional. Through the particular disposition they assumed, the teams were, in turn, establishing a pattern of decision outcomes which contributed to development of a particular type of exchange dyad. These dyads represented an overall intention to exchange in either a partnership-based model, or one involving simple uncritical transactions between the parties.

The current research program identified that this was not a deliberate or intended strategy on the part of the study teams. This finding served to further underline the importance of the factors found to have statistical significance when teams favoured one disposition over the other.

The factor characteristics for relational and transactional disposition were developed in detail in Chapter 7, and are summarised at Table 8.1. The characteristics set out at Table 8.1 were found to be qualitatively important, and indicated that there was a marked contrast between the settings and circumstances present when teams favoured one type of disposition over the other. This contrast was an important finding, as it suggested that if organisations are able to influence the pre-conditions for top decision-making teams to act relationally rather than transactionally, this would facilitate cohesive adaptation to changing environments. This proposition is developed more fully in the discussion of grounded theory in Chapter 9.
TABLE 8.1
Relational & Transactional Disposition - Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relational Disposition</th>
<th>Transactional Disposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- a higher relationship emphasis in team leader leadership style</td>
<td>- a lower relationship emphasis in team leader leadership style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher relationship emphasis in team member job roles</td>
<td>- a lower relationship emphasis in team member job roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher propensity for member orientation to act in partnership</td>
<td>- a higher propensity for member orientation to act-independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher level of disagreement/ dissent about decision outcomes</td>
<td>- a lower level of disagreement/ dissent about decision outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher emphasis on team processes to resolve disagreement/ dissent</td>
<td>- a lower emphasis on team processes to resolve disagreement/ dissent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher incidence of consensual commitment in relation to decisions</td>
<td>- a lower incidence of consensual commitment in relation to decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the teams was identified as engaging in the creation of either relational or transactional exchange dyads through their decision-making behaviours. The type of dyad was defined according to whether the teams showed an overall disposition which was based either on building partnerships, or acting independently towards the other party. Dyadic decision-making activity reflected the characteristics at Table 8.1, according to whether behaviour was either relational, or transactional in nature.

The salient question invited by the finding about a basic social process of dyadic decision-making was whether this dynamic had implications in a broader sense for the process of organisational adaptation, the context in which the current research program of top level teams was framed.

To answer this question, the data relating to the types of decisions which teams dealt with were analysed. It was concluded from this analysis that in every case where the teams considered an issue which involved clients or other organisational areas, the issue related to environmental change of some description. In most cases, this related to either changing client...
needs, or changing organisational imperatives driven by upheaval within the sector, both of which required an adaptive response. This clear link between decision-making and the organisational environment is illustrated in Table 8.2, which summarises the types of decisions the teams dealt with under key categories.

**TABLE 8.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Type</th>
<th>Number of Decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- responding to, and anticipating changing client needs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- collaboration to reduce organisational costs in an environment of reduced public funding</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- improving IT security in response to increasing security risks</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- responding to changes in staff working patterns/needs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- building academic and community partnerships</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- improving organisational effectiveness in an increasingly competitive and service driven environment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- responding to changing teaching and learning environment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data at Table 8.2 indicate that 22 decision involving clients and other organisational areas were ones in which the organisation was required to adapt to changing client needs, or to other emerging imperatives within the external environment. As this study identified 22 such decisions for these teams over only a 12-18 month observation period, it was possible to extrapolate that over the longer term, the cumulative decisions made by these teams had very direct implications for effective organisational adaptation. In this context, the question of
whether the teams in the current research program favoured a relational, compared to a transactional disposition in decision-making was particularly relevant, given the extant research which identifies partnership-based networks as central to organisational effectiveness within knowledge industries (Pettigrew & Fenton, 2000).

It was extrapolated from these findings that an important factor in whether the organisations in the current research program would adapt effectively to their changing environments was whether organisational units acted relationally, as compared to transactionally towards each other. It was further surmised that the nature of these interactions would be markedly shaped by top level team decision-making behaviours and outcomes. These propositions are developed further as potential implications of the grounded theory discussion at Chapter 9.

As well as the strong qualitative indicators set out at Table 8.1, there was also an indication that characteristics relating to team demographics, underlying organisational roles, and team cultures may have played a minor role in creating a level of pre-disposition for top level teams to favour the formation of one form of exchange dyad over the other. The impact and significance of potential pre-dispositional factors is developed more fully in the discussion of grounded theory at Chapter 9.
8.5 CORE CATEGORY: A BASIC SOCIAL PROCESS OF DYADIC DECISION-MAKING - CONCLUSION

The data collection and analysis process conducted in the current research study identified five important categories of findings. Two higher order categories were identified. One related to the decision processes adopted by the study teams; and one to the decision outcomes reached by the study teams. These were the higher order categories of team process orientation and team outcome orientation.

The elements of these higher order categories were found to interact in distinctive ways when the teams demonstrated a disposition towards acting in a partnership way towards clients and other organisational areas, compared to acting in a more independent way. This dynamic indicated there were two near-core categories present in the data, that of relational disposition and transactional disposition.

Because of their distinctively different characteristics, these near-core categories were in turn found to be two parts of a core category, which occurred at the highest level of abstraction in top level team decision-making behaviour. This core category was found to be a basic social process, described as dyadic decision-making.

The conclusion about a phenomenon of dyadic decision-making was based on an indication in the current research program that the top level teams distinctly favoured either partnership-based, or act-independently decision outcomes. Moreover, patterns of decision-making which were either partnership or independent in orientation were found to be associated with an underlying orientation on the part of the study teams towards a certain type of relationship.
building intent towards other organisational units. This orientation indicated a disposition towards building either relational or transactional exchange relationships respectively. Therefore, the activity of decision-making by top level teams was concluded to be an important element in the creation of broader exchange dyads between organisational units.

In conclusion, a basic social process of dyadic decision-making emerged from this research, the components of which had qualitatively distinctive and different characteristics. This basic social process is now further developed as a grounded theory for the relationship between top level team decision-making and exchange behaviour between organisational units. Potential ramifications for organisational design and adaptation within a knowledge industries context are also developed.
PART 4

DISCUSSION OF THEORY AND IMPLICATIONS
Chapter 9: Grounded Theory - Implications for Research and the Literature

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour
CHAPTER 9

GROUNDED THEORY - IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND THE LITERATURE

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this program of study was to develop a theory which explained the social influences and social process involved when top level teams (TLT’s) made decisions, and the implications of this for exchange relationships between organisational units. The specific context for the research was effective organisational adaptation. The study’s purpose was to understand the factors at play in TLT decision-making behaviour, and to develop a grounded theory which described the interplay between these factors. The substantive research question was:

**How does top level team decision-making behaviour influence exchange relationships between organisational units?**

The notion of theory within a research context incorporates an understanding of relevant concepts (Bacharach, 1989), in developing a picture of observed phenomena, their characteristics and relationships (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). The current program of study sought to make a methodological contribution to research practice, by using an innovative methodology to explore a well researched area of organisation study. The area concerned had already received considerable attention in the extant research, though there was a strong indication in the literature that there was a need for more practice-based studies. The current research program, therefore, applied a qualitatively-based research design, with a view to understanding the social world of top level teams from an inside perspective, using grounded theory methodology. The methodological question the current research program addressed was:
How will an innovative methodology such as grounded theory provide new insight into organisational exchange dynamics?

While the methodology for the study was essentially qualitative and based on a grounded theory approach, the study did take place in a substantive context, that of knowledge industries. For this reason, the extant literature on organisational effectiveness within knowledge industries was incorporated as an effectiveness reference point for team outcomes.

Notwithstanding this degree of broad framing, the research methodology proved to have sufficient freedom to allow phenomena to emerge freely, and incorporated comprehensive triangulation of data (Herman & Egri, 2002) to substantiated findings across multiple sources. As phenomena emerged more clearly, the extant literature in particular areas of team process effectiveness and team outcome effectiveness was further sourced, by way of drawing a broader framework of substantiation, wherever possible. Using this approach, the study methodology allowed a number of emerging insights to be validated against existing knowledge, while permitting new insights to emerge about phenomena, which were related to the specific social situation being studied.

Using the grounded theory methodology outlined in Part 2, it was found that Top Level Teams (TLT’s) undertook a process of Dyadic Decision-Making when they considered decision issues which affected clients and other organisational areas. The current research program found that the activity associated with making decisions in top level teams is neither random in its overall orientation, nor able to be separated from the broader process of relationship-building which occurs between organisational units on a day to day basis. In fact, the findings of the current research program indicated there are factors about the process and outcome orientation of top level teams which lead them to build a certain type of exchange dyad with clients and other organisational units through their decision-making. A more important finding of the current research, in the context of the research question, was the indication that the nature of exchange dyads created through the TLT decision-making process may impact on the ability of organisations to adapt cohesively to environmental change.
The extant research has established that partnership-based exchange relationships between organisational units are central to organisational cohesion in knowledge industries (Pettigrew & Fenton, 2000). From an organisational theory point of view, the current research program infers that organisations may be able to influence top level team decision-making in a way which leads to the development of relational exchange dyads between organisational units. The significance of this inference is that through decisions about aspects of organisational design, entities may be able to shape their effectiveness in adapting to changing environments, through influencing the way top level teams develop exchange relationships between each other. While the potential broader implications of the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making for organisational adaptation and organisational design are addressed in this chapter, these are identified as areas for further comprehensive research in the future.

This chapter commences with an explanation of the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making which emerged from the current program of study. The individual elements of the theory are then developed in more detail. An important aspect of the research problem was to identify the contribution that a grounded theory-based methodology could make to understanding the dynamics of organisational exchange behaviour. This question is addressed in the context of the grounded theory which has been developed through the research methodology adopted for this program of study. Finally, the chapter discusses the implications of the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making for the extant literature.

### 9.2 ELEMENTS OF PROPOSED MODEL AND THEORY

The data collection and analysis process discussed in Part 3 identified categories of findings which emerged from the study at progressively higher levels of abstraction. Two higher order categories initially emerged, namely team process orientation and team outcome orientation. Orientation factors were found to combine in distinctive ways in forming two near-core categories relating to the decision-making disposition of the teams, namely relational disposition and transactional disposition. These near core categories were, in turn, identified
as elements of a single core category. This core category represents a basic social process of *Dyadic Decision-Making*, which was identified in the behaviour of top level teams.

Properties within and between categories which were found to have strong correlations are reproduced in summary form at Table 9.1. This table lists the qualitatively important relationships found in the current research program. These relationships were found to be present in different configurations when the teams showed an overall disposition to act either relationally towards clients and other organisational areas, or to act transactionally. Table 9.2 takes the most salient statistical findings from Table 9.1, and compares them in an applied sense. Table 9.2 illustrates the differences between the teams when they showed a relational disposition, vis-à-vis a transactional disposition.

Figure 9.1 represents all of the categories which emerged from the current research program, as well as their properties. The most salient findings reflected in Table 9.1 (and summarised in Table 9.2) have been overlaid on Figure 9.1. In this way, a high level summary picture is presented of important relationships which were identified between phenomena. These relationships stood out from others by virtue of their having a higher level of influence in determining TLT behaviour, and are therefore considered to be the key components of the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making.
### TABLE 9.1
**Qualitatively Important Relationships - Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher Order Category: Team Process Orientation (Chapter 5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between lack of leader support for dissent, and unresolved dissent ( (\rho = 1.00, p &lt; .01) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between unresolved dissent, and residual disharmony of interest about decisions ( (\rho = .61, p &lt; .01) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a strength of the relationship between residual disharmony of interest about decisions, and lack of consensus/commitment to decisions ( (\rho = 1.00, p &lt; .01) )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher Order Category: Team Outcome Orientation (Chapter 6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between the emphasis on relationships in leadership style, and leader partnership intent during decision-making ( (\rho = .34, p &lt; .01) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between relationship emphasis in job roles, and team member partnership intent during decision-making ( (\rho = .58, p &lt; .01) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between team leader intent in decision-making, and the outcome orientation of teams ( (\rho = .60, p &lt; .01) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between total majority intent, and the outcome orientation of teams ( (\rho = .75, p &lt; .01) )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Near Core Categories: Relational &amp; Transactional Disposition (Chapter 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between the degree of relationship emphasis in total job roles, and the propensity for partnership decisions by teams ( (\rho = .95, p &lt; .05) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between the degree of relationship emphasis in total job roles and the predominance of partnership over independent intent among members ( (\rho = .92, p &lt; .05) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between partnership-based decisions, and high levels of member consensual commitment ( (\rho = 1.00, p &lt; .01) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between relationship emphasis in leadership style, and lack of consensual commitment to decisions ( (\rho = -.62, p &lt; .01) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between act-independently decisions, and lack of member consensual commitment to decisions ( (\rho = .83, p &lt; .01) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the strength of the relationship between lack of consensual commitment to decisions, and process failure during discussions ( (\rho = 1.00, p &lt; .01) )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 9.2
Relational & Transactional Disposition - Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relational Disposition</th>
<th>Transactional Disposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- a higher relationship emphasis in team leader leadership style</td>
<td>- a lower relationship emphasis in team leader leadership style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher relationship emphasis in team member job roles</td>
<td>- a lower relationship emphasis in team member job roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher propensity for member orientation to act in partnership</td>
<td>- a higher propensity for member orientation to act independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher level of disagreement/dissent about decision outcomes</td>
<td>- a lower level of disagreement/dissent about decision outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher emphasis on team processes to resolve disagreement/dissent</td>
<td>- a lower emphasis on team processes to resolve disagreement/dissent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a higher incidence of consensual commitment in relation to decisions</td>
<td>- a lower incidence of consensual commitment in relation to decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The summary of important relationships highlighted at Figure 9.1 indicates that the following factors are important to the basic social process of Dyadic Decision-Making:

- the degree of relationship emphasis in team leadership style
- the degree of relationship emphasis in member job roles
- a team’s ability to develop consensual commitment to decisions
- the underlying orientation of a team in their decision outcomes (namely to act in partnership vis-à-vis to act independently)
- the underlying disposition of teams towards network-building with clients and other organisational areas (namely relational vis-a-vis transactional)

While these findings are important in understanding top level team (TLT) decision-making behaviour, they also have implications for broader organisational effectiveness, including the ability of an organisation to adapt cohesively to environmental change. The findings of a grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making indicate that in the substantive setting of knowledge industries, organisations can influence their ability to adapt to environmental change through choices about two important aspects of underlying organisational design.

The grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making is now developed in detail, including its implications for organisational adaptation, and organisational design.
Figure 9.1: Framework of Data Categories – Qualitatively Important Relationships
9.3 PROPOSED MODEL AND THEORY

The grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making, as identified by the findings of the current research study, is set out conceptually at Figure 9.2, which explains the qualitative relationships found between phenomena in the current program of research.

![Figure 9.2 Grounded Theory of Dyadic Decision-Making](image)

The research substantive research question was concerned with understanding top level team decision-making dynamics, and their effect on organisational exchange relationships. The model of Dyadic Decision-Making is therefore concerned in the first order with top level teams decision-making behaviour. In the model for Dyadic Decision-Making, *relationship emphasis in leadership style*, and *relationship emphasis in job role* are independent variables. Through their effect on intermediate variables, these independent variables shape the key dependent variable of interest in this study, namely *relational dyadic exchange*.

The question was framed in the context of organisational adaptation, and the research findings are able to be extrapolated as to their potential implications for an organisation’s adaptive capacity. This arises from the strong link found in the current program of research between...
decision-making behaviour and the type of relationship dyads which top level teams in organisations create between each other. The potential implications for organisational adaptation are explored in Section 9.4.

Finally, the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making indicates that organisational design may affect top level team behaviour in the context of organisational adaptation. Moreover, the current research program finds that organisations may be able to influence top level team behaviour and, by extension, their adaptive capacity, through choices about organisational design. The potential implications for organisational design are explored in Section 9.5.

The components of the grounded theory model are now discussed.

9.3.1 Independent Variable: *Relationship Emphasis in Leadership Style*

The findings of this research indicate that in the substantive context of knowledge industries, the extent to which leaders place an emphasis on the relationship aspects of the leadership role has an important influence on the decision-making behaviour of top level teams.

In the current research program, team leaders differed in their approach to leading their teams. An observed difference which was particularly noted was the time and effort leaders gave to effectively managing dissent behaviour from team members. Where team leaders placed a high degree of emphasis on positively processing dissent behaviour, this was found to result in high levels of harmony of interest among team members (including dissenters) about decision outcomes. On the other hand, where leaders did not manage dissent to a positive outcome, there was found to be residual dis-harmony of interest among team members around decision outcomes.

In these situations, within the context of the present research study, dissenting members invariably felt their input had not been appropriately valued and assessed by the team, and that the leader had failed to support them as individuals in their right to dissent. It became clear...
from the observations and individual interviews that team leaders who managed dissent positively placed a high emphasis on effectively managing the relationship aspects of dissent behaviour within their teams. In this way, dissenters were not made to feel marginalised, either by decision processes or decision outcomes.

In the extant research (Burns, 2003; Bass, 1985), one broad categorisation of leadership style is that it can be either transformational or transactional. The four key behaviours of transformational leaders fall into two realms. The first realm is those behaviours which engage followers as a group. These behaviours are associated with leaders being charismatic and visionary. The second realm is those behaviours which engage followers at an individual level, through the relationship developed between the leader and follower. These behaviours are to do with challenging followers intellectually, and providing support for followers at an individual level. By contrast, transactional leaders put less emphasis on the relationships aspects of leader-follower interactions, preferring instead to use goal-setting and associated reward (and punishment) behaviours to motivate.

In the current research program, leadership style was measured and assessed to develop a picture of leader behaviours across transformational and transactional aspects, using a recognized survey instrument designed for this purpose (Podsakoff et al., 1990; Podsakoff et al., 1984). The leadership styles of the four team leaders was attributed a final rating according to whether their styles were, on balance, transformational or transactional, based on the survey instrument responses. All leaders emerged as being either transformational or transactional, and the essential difference between their styles - as confirmed by the assessment instrument - related to their approach to managing relationships. The difference between the leaders was whether they utilised transformational leadership behaviours of intellectual stimulation and individual support to develop a strongly relationship-based orientation in their interactions with individual followers, or used more transactional reward and punishment behaviours.

The findings of the leadership style instrument triangulated consistently with observed leader behaviours during team meetings, and the data collected through confidential interviews. For
this reason, based on the extant research in this area (Burns, 2003), the degree of emphasis on relationships in leadership style was identified as being a key point of difference between the four team leaders. Moreover, the strength of the statistical relationships which emerged from the current research program indicated that the degree to which leaders emphasised relationships in their leadership styles had a number of important implications. These are now discussed.

9.3.1.1 Implications for Team Leader Intent

The leader’s relationship emphasis in their leadership style was found to have a strong correlation with their intent during decision-making. More precisely, leaders who placed a high degree of emphasis on relationships were found to have a disposition towards decision outcomes which reflected a partnership-based intent, especially where the decisions involved clients and other organisational areas. By contrast, leaders with a lower regard for relationships were found to display a disposition in their intent which was to act independently (or in a non-partnering way) towards clients and other organisational area.

The strong correlation between the emphasis of team leaders on relationships and their intent to act in a partnership-based way has implications for grounded theory development. In the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making, relationship emphasis in leadership style plays the role of an independent variable, which qualitatively influences the dependent variable leader partnership intent in a positive way. This relationship is shown at Figure 9.3, which represents the first component of the grounded theory which emerged from the current research program.

![Figure 9.3 Dyadic Decision-Making: Relationship Emphasis in Leadership Style](image-url)
9.3.1.2 Implications for Team Outcomes

The current research study identified a strong relationship between the type of intent team leaders showed towards decision issues, and the orientation of teams in their decision outcomes. This relationship was validated through both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Specifically, where leaders argued from a position of partnership-building, this was invariably the type of orientation demonstrated by the team in its decision-making. By contrast, where leaders argued for the team to act independently, this was invariably the type of decision outcome the team arrived at. These relationships were found to have statistical significance.

Therefore in the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making, leader partnership intent positively qualitatively affects the dependent variable team partnership orientation in a positive way. This relationship is shown at Figure 9.4, which represents a further progressive iteration of theory arising from the current research program.

![Figure 9.4 Dyadic Decision-Making: Leader Partnership Intent](image)

9.3.1.3 Implications for Team Processes

As well as its influence on team outcomes, the independent variable relationship emphasis in leadership style also has implications for team processes.

There is a body of extant research which indicates reaching consensual commitment in decision-making is a key consideration in team process effectiveness (Dooley & Fryxell, 1999). The leaders in the current research program were all found to argue for both partnership-based, and act-independently outcomes, on a decision by decision basis. For some
decisions, there was effectively less discretion in decision-making, because of issues such as contractual considerations. However, notwithstanding this limitation, an important finding arose from the current research program about the influence of leadership style on the pattern of team process behaviours. These patterns related to development of consensual commitment around decision outcomes.

The strength of the statistical correlations in the current research program indicated that leaders with a high relationship emphasis in their leadership styles placed a high degree of emphasis on building consensual commitment amongst team members during team discussions. The two particular areas leaders were found to concentrate on in this regard were the positive management of dissent behaviour, and utilisation of processes which built harmony of interest between team members around decision outcomes. By contrast, the findings of this study indicate that leaders who placed less emphasis on relationships also paid less attention to building consensual commitment.

Therefore in the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making, the independent variable of relationship emphasis in leadership style also has a qualitatively positive effect on a second dependent variable, namely member consensual commitment. This relationship is shown at Figure 9.5, which represents a further progressive iteration of the theory which arose from the current research program.

![Figure 9.5 Dyadic Decision-Making: Member Consensual Commitment](image-url)
While *member consensual commitment* is a dependent variable of *relationship emphasis in leadership style*, it also in turn plays a role in its own right in determining team cohesiveness around decision outcomes. Cohesive decision-making is a factor in top level teams successfully developing networks with other organisational areas. This dynamic implies that *member consensual commitment* plays an important qualitative role of moderating variable in the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making. This role is discussed further in Section 9.3.3.

### 9.3.1.4 Implications For Organisational Adaptation

In the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making, a team leader’s emphasis in their leadership style is an important factor influencing the orientation of teams in their decision-making, and the level of consensual commitment towards decisions outcomes. While leadership style is a highly individual and personal phenomenon, there is an argument that it can be influenced organisationally. This is discussed at Section 9.4, which examines the issue of the potential implications of the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making for organisational adaptation.

### 9.3.2 Independent Variable: *Relationship Emphasis in Job Role*

The issue of team member job roles emerged as important in the current research program. Observation of team dynamics and confidential interviews established that when team members participated in top level team decision-making, their behaviour was strongly shaped by considerations about the requirements of their day to day job roles. In particular, the level of relationship emphasis in team member job roles was found to influence their perspectives and intentions in decision-making. In the current research program, the extent of partnership emphasis in job roles was associated with whether job roles were defined in lateral terms, with a high emphasis on working collaboratively, or defined in vertical terms, with a more self-contained and inward looking orientation.
9.3.2.1 Implications for Team Member Intent

A strong link was identified between the level of relationship emphasis in the job role definitions of team members, and the nature of their intent during decision-making. Members with day to day job roles which had a high emphasis on relationship building with other organisational areas were found to favour acting in a partnership-building way towards clients and other organisational areas. By contrast, members who had job roles with less emphasis on relationship-building showed a marked disposition to argue for decision outcomes based on acting independently towards clients and other organisational areas.

Therefore, in the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making relationship emphasis in job role is an independent variable which qualitatively influences the dependent variable member partnership intent in a positive way. This relationship is shown at Figure 9.6, which is a further iteration of grounded theory development in the current research program.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 9.6 Dyadic Decision-Making: Relationship Emphasis in Job Role

The finding about the importance of partnership emphasis in team member job roles is important of itself. However, it is more important within the context of another key finding from the research.
9.3.2.2 Implications for Team Outcomes

The current research program found that there was a strong correlation between the team leader’s intent on a decision issue and the final decision outcome. However, the statistical correlations developed during the data analysis indicated there was a stronger correlation between the aggregate balance of team member intent on a decision issue, and final decision outcomes. This finding meant that, while a team leader’s point of view had a strong influence on decision outcomes, decisions were able to be swayed to a different outcome by a majority team view which was contrary to the leader’s.

Therefore, in the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making, member partnership intent acts as a qualitatively moderating variable between leader partnership intent and team partnership orientation. This relationship is shown at Figure 9.7, which represents a further iteration of the grounded theory arising from the current research program.

Figure 9.7 Dyadic Decision-Making: Member Partnership Intent
9.3.2.3 Implications for Organisational Adaptation

The finding about the important influence of aggregated team member intent was particularly important, within the context that individual team member intent was influenced by the level of relationship emphasis in their job role. This finding implied that if top level team composition was unevenly balanced towards members with vertically defined job roles, the weight of member views was likely to be towards a team disposition to act independently towards clients and other organisational areas. The extant research about network building in knowledge industries (Pettigrew & Fenton, 2000) indicates this would be an inappropriate dynamic to foster within top level teams, who should be focused on partnership-based relationships.

The current research program finds that the underlying job roles of members in top level teams is an important consideration, as well as the balance of these job roles. The question this invites is whether underlying job role is also an important influence on a team leader’s intent in decision-making, indeed more so than their underlying leadership style. This question could not be explored to any extent in the current research program, because all leaders had fundamentally similar underlying organisational roles. However it can be inferred from the literature comparing leaders and managers that in the case of leaders, their underlying leadership style tends to transcends job role, whereas managers are more likely to adapt their approach to the role they are in (Parry, 2001). However there is recent research which tends to suggest leadership styles can be influenced organisationally, and this is explored in the discussion in Section 9.5 about the implications of the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making for organisational design considerations.

9.3.2.4 Implications of Independent Variables Acting Together

In summary, the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making indicates that, through the independent variables relationship emphasis in leadership style and relationship emphasis in job role, the dependent variable of team partnership orientation is qualitatively shaped. This
dynamic occurs through the operation of the intermediate and moderating variables discussed in this section.

While these relationships are important components of the grounded theory in an applied sense, the current research program also indicates that the type of orientation top level teams display in decision-making plays an important role in determining the type of exchange relationships which teams foster with clients and other organisational areas. In the context of the research question this is a key consideration, and means that the dependent variable of team partnership orientation is of most interest in the context of its influence as an intermediate variable on the development of exchange relationships (dyads) between top level teams.

For this reason, the dependent variable of relational dyadic exchange is of most interest in the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making. The dependent variable of relational dyadic exchange is now discussed.

9.3.3 Dependent Variable: Relational Dyadic Exchange

As indicated in Part 3 of this study which discussed the data analysis and findings in detail, the statistical significance of the correlations between factors in the grounded theory model suggested the identified phenomena did not merely occur by chance.

The data analysis identified that the teams overall favoured either partnership-based decisions, or decisions based more on acting independently towards clients and other organisational areas. Moreover, there was a consistency about the way teams in the study approached decisions. Key behavioural factors were seen to combine in distinctively different and predictable ways when teams reach decisions based on partnership vis-à-vis act-independently outcomes.

This dynamic indicated the presence of a strong two dimensional pattern in the data. In the first dimension, teams had a particular outcome orientation towards partnering or acting
independently. In the second dimension, there was a distinctive set of characteristics present where teams exhibited a particular type of outcome orientation.

While this was a key finding in itself, the current research also indicated that when team leaders and team members took part in the decision-making process, they also had a focus on larger relationship considerations. As outlined in Section 9.3.1, where the notion of member consensual commitment was discussed, the particular outcome orientation of the teams had important implications for internal team relationships.

However, of arguably greater significance from an organisational perspective, the interviews conducted with team leaders and team members indicated that when they took part in the decision-making process, they also had a focus on relationships external to the team, namely with clients and other organisational areas. As set out in the detailed examples provided in Chapter 8, recurring themes in these discussions included an identification of the importance of connecting and building networks, and in some cases, an emphasis on wanting to change the nature of existing external relationships to make them more constructive and collaborative. One team leader went so far as to comment on the difference between their team’s external relationship orientation and that of another team.

9.3.3.1 Implications for Exchange Relationships

In view of the indication which presented in both the measurable statistical relationships and the qualitative data from the study, it was concluded that team decision-making represented more than just a process by which the top level teams in the study dealt with day to day strategic and operational issues relating to their departments. Drawing from the fundamental precepts of exchange theory (Cardona, Lawrence & Bentley, 2004), it was concluded that the process of decision-making by these teams was, in fact, part of the larger process by which organisational units develop network exchange relationships within the organisations.

Taking into account the research on embedded exchange patterning (Lincoln, 1982), it is proposed that the process of top level team decision-making can be viewed as a distinctive but
integral component of the phenomenon of relationship dyad creation, which organisational units engage in as part of day to day organisational life.

During debriefing sessions conducted by the researcher, the teams expressed some surprise that their outcomes and associated processes could be patterned. However, when presented with the qualitative data, teams accepted that the findings reflected their real-life behaviour. This insight suggests the patterning dynamic observed in the study did not occur entirely through deliberate choice on the part of the teams. This finding, in turn, tends to give further weight to the important role which differences in the two independent variables play in shaping the decision orientation of top level teams, and in turn the nature of the external exchange relationships which teams seek to build.

9.3.3.2 Implications for Exchange Dyads

A further component of the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making concerns the relationship between patterns in the decision behaviour of top level teams, and the type of relationship dyads which teams build with clients and other organisational areas. In grounded theory terms, an orientation towards a particular type of decision outcome will - through the operation of distinctive characteristics associated with that type of orientation - indicate an intent to establish an exchange dyad which can be categorized as either relational or transactional.

This dynamic means that a preponderance of partnership-based team decisions fosters an exchange dyad which has a relational character. By contrast, a preponderance of decision outcomes which are based on acting independently fosters an exchange dyad which is transactional in nature. “Relational” and “transactional” are considered to be appropriate descriptors, as they have an already established place and meaning in the extant research by Lincoln (1982) on exchange dyads between organisational actors. In the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making, the notion of organisational actors is simply broadened to encompass top level teams acting in exchange relationships between one another.
9.3.3.3 Implications for Dyad Strength

While the pattern of decision outcomes affects the type of relationship dyad created, it is further proposed that these dyads can vary in strength. The findings of the current research program about variability in team member consensual commitment indicates that the strength of exchange relationships between organisational units is related to the level of team cohesiveness which is built around decision outcomes. To be strong over time, relationship dyads must be based on consistent decision-making patterns, as well as consistent commitment and follow through on implementing decisions. Therefore, member consensual commitment determines the strength of relationship dyads over time. Justification for this view lies in the statistical significance of the relevant relationships identified in this study, as outlined in Section 9.3.1.

The positive relationship between *team partnership orientation* and *relational dyadic exchange* is depicted at Figure 9.8. This figure also reflects the moderating influence which *member consensual commitment* has, where the strength and effectiveness of relational exchange dyads is influenced by member follow through on decision undertakings.
The findings of the current research program indicate an important role for top level team decision-making in fostering appropriate exchange networks between organisational units. Notwithstanding the key finding about this basic social process being present within the decision-making behaviour of top level teams, an important part of the research question was to identify the implications of this for organisational adaptation. This aspect of the research question is now examined.

9.4 DYADIC DECISION-MAKING AND ORGANISATIONAL ADAPTATION

The findings of the current program of research provide the basis on which to extrapolate about the implications of team decision-making behaviour for effective organisational adaptation. The grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making has important potential implications for how effectively organisations adapt to changes in their environments.

The extant research indicates that in knowledge industries, organisational effectiveness over the long term is inherently bound up with an organisation’s ability to build partnership-based networks (Pettigrew & Fenton, 2000). The extant research makes a deliberate distinction in this regard between partnership-based and non-partnership based networks in that the latter lack the sophisticated integrative capability required to connect multiple sources of organisational knowledge and expertise. In this context, connectivity is important in knowledge industries, because it creates an ability to respond in a nimble and cohesive way to changes in client needs and environmental conditions. Creation of internal networks within organisations is a phenomenon which tends to occur by chance rather than design, and is difficult to orchestrate organisationally in any systematic and reliable way. This limitation means that to a large extent, the creation of appropriate networks is a function of cognition and attitude at the top decision-making team level.

The principles of systems theory are relevant to a discussion of organisational adaptation through network relationships between organisational units. A basic premise of systems theory is the connectedness inherent between organisational sub-systems (Stacey, 1996), and
the notion that a change in any sub-system invariably implies a need for adjustment and change in other parts of the system. In this sense, systems theory emphasises the notion of interconnectedness and mutual dependency between organisational sub-systems. While “sub-system” can take on a number of connotations in systems theory from human to non human systems, one level of the sub-system concept relates to individual organisational units.

The implication of a systems paradigm for effective organisational adaptation is the premise that the level of cohesion in the way organisations adjust to changes in their environment is associated with the underlying network dynamic present in the relationships between organisational units. A preponderance of network relationships based on partnering is more likely to encourage an organisationally cohesive response to environmental change, compared to networks which are more transactional, and have a lower level of sophistication in their connectivity.

It is in this context that the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making may be an important consideration for organisational adaptation. In particular, the grounded theory has implications for the development of network relationships between organisational units, because inter-unit exchange at the most senior level is invariably associated with decisions made by top level teams. In more specific terms, the theory of Dyadic Decision-Making suggests that the more top level teams within an organisation build relational, rather than transactional exchange dyads between each other through their decision-making behaviour, the more organisations will build a network of exchange dyads which fosters a cohesive response to environmental change.

In the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making, this imputation about relationship dyad creation at the broader organisational level is represented diagrammatically at Figure 9.9. This figure is effectively an extrapolation on a broader scale of the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making at the individual organisational unit level, which appears as an inset within Figure 9.1. The proposition represented at Figure 9.1 is considered worthy of future exploration through a specific research study to explore these propositions empirically.
The grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making is now discussed in the context of its potential implications for organisational design.

### 9.5 DYADIC DECISION-MAKING AND ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN

The findings of the current program of research provide the basis on which to extrapolate about the implications of team decision-making behaviour for organisational design, within the context of organisational adaptation.

Given the strong role played by the independent variables of *relationship emphasis in leadership style* and *relationship emphasis in job design* in the grounded theory model, there is an important indication that if these variables are able to be influenced organisationally, entities may be able to adapt more cohesively and effectively to environmental changes. The implications of organisations seeking to influence the settings for the two independent variables are now reflected on.
9.5.1 **Relationship Emphasis of Team Leaders**

The extant research suggests that leadership style is more than anything an individual phenomenon, in that leaders differ individually in terms of the mix of transformational and transactional elements which they integrate within their overall leadership approaches (Burns, 2003). There is a temptation to look at the leadership style issue simplistically, by taking the view that staffing an organisation with transformational leaders will achieve the underlying dynamics necessary for building relational networks through top level team decision-making. However, this is considered to be rather utopian and impractical, given that leadership style is usually assessed in a post-hoc way over time, and is arguably most reliably measured retrospectively after behaviour has been observed. In this sense, proactively seeking leaders with transformational styles may be a less than practical proposition.

There is an important body of research which indicates organisations are able to build transformational cultures, as distinct from transactional cultures (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Underlying cultural settings which tend to be associated with transformational cultures include:

- emphasis on longer term organisational direction and goals
- involvement of employees in direction setting, planning and decision-making at an organisational unit level
- focus on organisational development (OD) practices, and continuous fine-tuning which directly involves and engages staff
- focus on organisational learning principles
- emphasis on establishing effective integrating mechanisms between and across organisational units (for example on an issues or portfolios basis, such as quality or service)
- emphasis on setting goals/ objectives for organisational units to achieve collaboratively
- deployment of resources on a shared basis
The literature suggests that if organisations place greater emphasis in these areas, the conditions may be created for more transformational cultures. Such cultures are likely to have an influence on individual leadership styles, in that they will encourage leaders of organisational units and top level teams to put greater emphasis on relationship-building in their interactions with followers and other organisational areas. There is recent research in this area by Shivers-Blackwell (2004) which proposes that leaders do take important cues from organisational messages about culture and expectations. This is discussed more fully in Section 9.6.

As part of the current research program, an analysis was conducted of other organisational factors which potentially influenced the outcome orientation of the study teams. This analysis indicates that fostering an underlying transformational culture with an emphasis on relationships is particularly important in organisational units which have a high degree of technical or functional focus, and/or have a predominance of males in leader/manager roles. The discussion in Chapter 8 identified such environments as particularly conducive to transactional, rather than transformational leadership behaviours.

In conclusion, there is an indication arising from the current research that initiatives by organisations to positively influence the settings for the independent variable of relationship emphasis in leadership style may lead to an improvement in an organisation’s adaptive capacity. This dynamic would seem to be possible through the effect it would have on fostering top level team decision-making behaviour which builds relational exchange dyads. This is identified as an area for future empirical research studies.

### 9.5.2 Relationship Emphasis of Team Members

The findings of a grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making indicate that the type of relationship networks created by top level teams will be influenced by the emphasis on relationship building which is reflected in managerial job roles. In practice, the current research program finds that a reliable indicator of relationship emphasis is the extent to which
job roles are defined in terms of lateral responsibilities, as compared to vertical responsibilities.

The current research program indicates that this dynamic occurs partly through the influence which the underlying job role has on the disposition team members have towards decisions which involve clients and other organisational units. (In the top level team setting, team members are usually managers of sub-units in their own right).

However, what is more important is the finding in this research about the key influence which the balance of member job roles within top level teams has on decision outcomes. The current research program found that where team members showed a predominant disposition towards a certain type of decision outcome (either partnering or acting independently), this dynamic invariably swayed the decision to that type of outcome, even if the leader displayed a different decision disposition.

This finding may be as potentially important when seen in the context of job design. An approach to managerial job design which emphasises relationship building may increase the probability that teams will make decisions which show a partnership orientation. The grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making indicates that, by extension, the balance in member job role definitions within top level teams will also have a strong influence on the type of exchange dyads which TLT’s create with other organisational units, namely relational or transactional.

Notwithstanding this finding in the current research program, it is not practical for organisations to define all managerial job roles in lateral terms. However, it may be important for organisations to strike the right balance in this regard. This might be done through having at least an even proportion of laterally defined managerial positions, and ensuring the occupants of these positions are represented in the membership of top level decision-making teams. Organisations do have considerable discretion over job design, and this is the vehicle for influencing the balance of managerial role definitions to achieve an appropriate mix.
The examination of other potential influencing factors conducted as part of this study indicated that having an appropriate level of laterally defined managerial job roles is particularly important in organisational units which are technically or functionally focused, and/or male dominated in their staffing mix.

In the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making, the potential qualitative relationship between organisational design factors; the creation of relationship dyads at the broader organisational level; and effective organisational adaptation is represented diagrammatically at Figure 9.10. This figure represents the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making extrapolated at a whole-of-organisational level.

The organisational design factors discussed in this section may play the role of antecedent conditions which would positively influence the settings in which effective organisational adaptation can be facilitated, through the activities of top level decision-making teams. This proposition is considered worthy of future empirical research.

![Figure 9.10 Dyadic Decision-Making: Potential Implications for Organisational Design](image-url)
9.5.3 Dyadic Decision-Making and Organisational Design - Conclusion

The grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making offers a potentially cohesive construct through which to view the qualitative relationships between organisational design, top level team decision-making behaviour, and organisational adaptation. Considered in a holistic sense, the theory indicates that organisational design factors may assume a role similar to that of independent variables in the extrapolated organisational model at Figure 9.10. For organisations wishing to improve their long term ability to adapt cohesively to environmental change, the grounded theory indicates there may be value in creating the antecedent conditions in which top level team leaders and members have more of a relationship emphasis in their leadership styles, and job role definitions respectively.

In conclusion, the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making offers an important starting point for more empirical studies of the relationship between underlying organisational design, top level team decision-making behaviour, and effective organisational adaptation. The finding about a basic social process of Dyadic Decision-Making in top level team behaviour has implications for the extant research and literature in a number of areas, and this is now discussed.

9.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the context of the limitations identified by the research community of positivist research methodologies for organisational studies, this research study also addressed the research question of:

How will an innovative methodology such as grounded theory provide new insight into organisational exchange dynamics?
Having developed an original theoretical contribution in this area through the proposed, model of Dyadic Decision-Making, it is possible to reflect on the contribution made by a research methodology which had an underlying qualitative emphasis, based on the grounded theory method.

The current program of research concerned the basic social process involved as human subjects dealt with the difficult issues associated with making important organisational decisions within a team model. Moreover, the research was concerned with understanding the dynamics which caused teams to be more or less effective in this regard. In the current research, the decision items which teams deal with differed meeting by meeting. Moreover, team dynamics were also seen to differ item by item, and indeed meeting by meeting, with all teams showing a mixture of effective processes and outcomes, as well as ineffective processes and outcomes.

The grounded theory-based research methodology permitted the researcher to observe first hand the dynamics of team behaviour, and to witness the extent to which behaviour was consistent, and was subject to change. Through the process of reflection and re-observation, the researcher was able to identify the subtleties of situation and human action which caused both behaviours and outcomes to vary, team by team. Through regular observation over a long period, team behaviours were able to be patterned, and regularities identified which informed a grounded theory for team decision-making behaviour.

Arguably the most important contribution which the methodology made to the theory development was the sophistication it provided in understanding the underlying impact of decision paradigms on broader organisational exchange relationships. In particular, the confidential interview process which typically explored observed phenomena at a deeper level revealed the fundamental focus on relationship considerations which were in the minds of team leaders in particular, at what appeared to be a pre-conscious level. This was critical to making and understanding the subtle link between decision-making behaviour and the disposition of top level teams towards the wider organisational community.
While the story line technique is not new to grounded theory-based research per-se, it proved to be invaluable in the current research for developing a progressive narrative of findings across four study groups who behaved quite differently from each other. The process of refining the data and reflecting this refinement in the story line gradually built an understanding of the common factors and variables across teams, and how these worked together in different ways to determine team behaviours and outcomes. Hence, the story line technique is a valuable innovation in the study of phenomena of this kind.

In this research study, an innovative patterning technique was developed to facilitate the development of a picture about the regularities which could be identified in top level team behaviour as study teams discussed and considered decision issues. The patterning technique was developed by the researcher and proved invaluable in recognising the key phenomena which were emerging in the research, and their relationships. The patterning technique was also effective in allowing the qualitative data to be represented in a form where it could be analysed nomothetically. The resultant calculations about correlations provided additional support for the significance of the relationships emerging through the grounded theory development process.

In conclusion, this research study identifies an important role for grounded theory method in understanding at a very fine level of granularity and subtlety the phenomena involved in the social processes by which teams of people make important decisions, and the implications of this for broader exchange relationships between organisational units. It is unlikely that positivist research methodologies could provide an equivalent level of responsiveness in understanding the phenomena which influence team dynamics in a situation specific way. In the current program of study, it was instructive from a research point of view that it required some eight to ten iterations of observation and analysis of team dynamics to understand the subtleties in the patterns of team behaviour. Within the current research, this process was facilitated by having extensive cross referential data which were gathered using quantitative techniques. The ability to triangulate qualitative data about the study subjects based on immediate observation, with quantitative data about their attitudes and behaviour in a more
general sense, proved to be a very reliable technique for confirming qualitative relationships which emerged, within a grounded theory context.

9.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LITERATURE

The literature review undertaken in preparation for the current research program identified a number of extant research streams which were relevant to the research question. These are presented in summary diagrammatic form at Figure 9.11, which depicts inter alia the complex way in which areas of the extant research intersected in framing the study.

The finding about a grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making has implications for four areas of the literature. Arranged in order of significance these areas are:

- network exchange and top level teams
- team decision-making effectiveness
- the role of leadership in team decision-making
- organisational design and adaptation

The aspects of the extant literature impacted by the current research program are highlighted at Figure 9.11. The implications of the current grounded theory for these areas of the literature are now discussed in detail.
Figure 9.11 Literature Review Framework – Areas Impacted by Current Research Study
9.7.1 Network Exchange and Top Level Teams

There is a substantial body of extant research on the phenomenon of social exchange within organisations, and more recently on social exchange in a network sense. Markovsky et al. (1988), and Jap and Anderson (2003) posit that in the final analysis, networks represent opportunity-based structures, where shared investment, goal congruence and interpersonal trust work in various measures to produce advantage for network members. Cook and Whitmeyer (1992: 116) propose that exchange theory and network theory provide a reliable basis for examining the concept of organisations as places of exchange, because these theories have a common premise “of the actor as motivated by interest or reward/punishment”.

The finding of the current research program about the phenomenon of Dyadic Decision-Making makes an important original contribution to the idiom of organisations as exchange networks. Clearly, the building of relationship dyads which are partnering in nature is important in breaking down boundaries which inhibit network development. The current research program indicates this type of dyad is strongly influenced through partnership oriented decision-making on the part of top level teams. This link has not been explicitly made in the extant literature to date on network exchange.

The current research program also provides some important new insights into the mechanics of how partnership-based behaviours develop, and of how this might be orchestrated at an organisational level.

9.7.1.1 Lateral Relationships and Network Theory

Pettigrew and Fenton (2000: 6) emphasise the increasing importance of lateral and informal relationship development. They propose that for firms in knowledge-based industries, lateral relationships are moving “front stage” to the “backcloth” of hierarchical reporting relationships. In their year 2000 review of the literature, Pettigrew and Fenton found that the ability to manage and co-ordinate lateral relationships is important in the modern context, though the extant literature offers little by way of insight into the development of such a
capacity at an applied level, within complex entities. The broad work on integrating mechanisms within large complex organisations has probably been the most practical treatment of the issue (Mintzberg, 1976; Mintzberg & Van Der Heyden, 2000), and is becoming dated in the context of less formal design models required in knowledge-based organisations.

The current research program’s findings offer an important potential new perspective on the operation of network theory in an applied sense within organisations, albeit in the substantive setting of knowledge industries.

### 9.7.1.2 Network Theory in Knowledge Industries

Goerzen and Beamish (2005) propose that, notwithstanding the theoretical imperatives of network building, the practical knowledge content of networks is under-explored in the research. They propose a more guarded view about benefits than Granovetter (1973), who found that the greater the diversity in the network, the richer the rewards for members. Instead, Goerzen and Beamish propose that, while in some circumstances networks can enhance breadth of member performance through superior cognitive problem solving and marshalling of resources (Hambrick et al., 1996), there is also the danger of suboptimal relationships (Gulati et al., 2000), due to competing objectives, and potential for mistrust between members.

In resolving this dilemma, Goerzen and Beamish propose that through the operation of transaction cost factors (Williamson, 1985), network members can suffer a loss of focus and fail to realize payoffs commensurate with the cost of nurturing and maintaining their network membership. Recent research by Hwang (2005) also questions network value, using similar arguments. Hwang finds that for a network member, the payoff equation is based on a balance between perceptions of potential short term personal gain, vis-à-vis potential long term exploitation by other members.
Notwithstanding examples of some caution emerging in the extant literature about the real value of networks to members, there is an indication arising from the current research program that the real value of networks should be seen in the context of their contribution more holistically to organisational success, especially in the area of cohesive adaptation. The link between top level team decision-making and the creation of exchange networks has not emerged in the extant research to date, and offers a potentially important paradigm for effective organisational adaptation to changing environments.

9.7.1.3 Decision-Making and Exchange Networks

The findings of the current research program indicate a direct relationship between the decision-making orientation of top level teams and the creation of exchange networks within organisations. This relationship should be further explored in the context of its implications for organisational adaptation. In the new century, the stakes for effective network building would seem to be higher than ever for organisations, because of the increasing emphasis on knowledge work, and the need to increasingly link together sources of organisational knowledge to adapt to changing customer demands.

The idiom of decision-making as an important contributor to development of exchange dyads provides a new dimension to understanding in practice the way exchange relationships develop, and become embedded within organisations. The important role of decision-making in the creation and embedding of exchange dyads is especially significant within the context that most of the critical organisational actions result directly or indirectly from a decision. Top level teams are charged with responsible for the majority of key decisions in most contemporary organisations.

In conclusion, the findings of the current research program about a link between outcome patterns in the decisions of top level teams and the creation of embedded exchange relationships is an important original contribution to the theory in this area, and indicates that this is an area worthy of further empirical exploration. Further research such as this would provide an important practical dimension to the understanding of network theory as it relates
to broader organisational effectiveness, including the ability to adapt to changing environments.

### 9.7.2 Team Decision-Making Effectiveness

Edmondson, Roberto, and Watkins, in a 2003 study, sought to combine key aspects of the extant research within an integrated model of top level team decision-making effectiveness. While the Edmondson et al. (2003) theory had not been empirically tested when the current research program commenced, the propositions presented by Edmondson and his colleagues were regarded as relevant reference points. The integrative nature of the Edmondson et al. (2003) research had some parallels with the grounded theory methodology for the current research program, in that both sought to understand the way a range of effectiveness factors combined to influence team process behaviour.

In their model, Edmondson et al. (2003: 232) proposed that “effectiveness depends both on team composition and on how the team leader manages team processes to reflect situational factors”. They emphasised, in particular, the importance of teams having shared information among members, as well as a shared interest by members in decision outcomes - citing team climate factors of power sharing and psychological safety as having a moderating influence.

The grounded theory methodology used in the current research program has provided the opportunity to reflect on the Edmondson et al. (2003) theoretical model in an applied sense. The finding in the current research program that reaching harmony of interest is a key consideration in top level team decision-making effectiveness gives support to the importance of symmetry of interest in the Edmondson et al.’ model. Moreover, the current research study goes further in that it draws an explicit link between harmony of interest and teams reaching Dooley and Fryxell’s (1999) concept of consensual commitment. In this sense, the current research program provides insight into an important practical outcome of harmony/ symmetry of interest.
The current research program also supports the Edmondson et al. proposition that the way leaders manage teams is an important consideration in team decision-making effectiveness. The implications of the current research program’s findings for the concept of consensual commitment, and leader influence within teams are now discussed.

### 9.7.2.1 Consensual Commitment

In the current research program, consensual commitment around decision outcomes was found to be a strong indicator of team process effectiveness. In this sense, the current research program supports the proposition by Bazerman (1998) that in senior teams, decision-making occurs more along the lines of negotiation than collaboration. The current research program concluded that failure to effectively negotiate dissenting views led to disharmony of interest, which in turn affected levels of consensual commitment, crucial elements in enacting the intent of top level teams in their decision outcomes. Negotiation, therefore, emerged as a key team behavioural consideration in the current research program.

On the question of the importance of negotiation to team processes, Kopeikina in a recent theoretical piece (2006: 19) concluded that “authenticity” is a key effectiveness factor. She identified that authentic decisions focus not on their consequences, but on the quality of processes and data, and achieving internal alignment around the decision itself. Kopeikina eschews the notion of consensus alone as an over-riding consideration in decision-making, because it can limit proper consideration and debate of all possible options. She believes that decision-making processes should push past the notion of reaching consensus, arguing that teams should properly debate and negotiate options until the correct one arises, and members express commitment to carrying the decision through to implementation.

In this sense Kopeikina (2006) appears to put more weight on the importance of commitment to implementation than reaching consensus. The findings of the current research study support Kopeikina’s findings in an empirical way. In particular, the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making finds that commitment to implementing decisions is a key consideration in the embedding of effective partnership-based exchange relationships with other organisational
units through top level team decision-making. In the current research program, lack of commitment to follow through moderated the extent to which this occurred.

In summary, the findings of the current research program support contemporary research which points to the importance of negotiation within teams to resolve dissent, and develop consensual commitment. Moreover, the current research program supports the emerging view in the literature about commitment to implementation being more important than consensus, further underlining the key role of negotiation in team process effectiveness.

9.7.2.2 Influence of Team Leaders

The current research program found a distinctive pattern between team leader behaviour and team process behaviour, which provided cause for reflection on a fundamental question of cause and effect in contemporary research about team effectiveness.

Contemporary researchers are consistent in their view that team decision-making processes and effectiveness are situation specific (Kopeikina, 2006; Passos & Caetano, 2005; Edmondson et al., 2003). While the current research program found that teams did behave differently, and their effectiveness varied from decision to decision, a key finding was the patterning phenomenon which could be identified in team processes and outcomes over a lengthy period of observation. The finding about patterns of team behaviour is important, in that it indicates that – notwithstanding situational variations - teams over a long period adopt behaviours they are comfortable with, and these become embedded, and difficult to break. Moreover, the current research program found a strong correlation between team behavioural patterns, and the leadership style of team leaders. This relationship suggests that leadership style is a factor not sufficiently recognised in contemporary research about top level team decision-making effectiveness.

While Edmondson et al. (2003) accord a high level of importance to team process factors (power sharing and psychological safety) in determining symmetry of information and interest within teams, the findings of the current research program suggest that these (and indeed other
team process factors) may in fact be functions of the leadership style of the team leader. This finding suggests that an important starting point for influencing team process effectiveness is influencing team leaders to adopt a greater relationship emphasis in their behaviours within the top level team decision-making setting. Because relationship emphasis by team leaders was found to correlate with effective team process patterns, it can be inferred that the influence of leadership style on team processes is worthy of greater attention in the research.

The current research program also provides some important insight into another aspect of leader influence recently explored in contemporary research, namely the role of power and status in team decision-making. Thye, Willer and Markovsky in a recent study (2006: 1496) propose a “status influence theory”, whereby status differences between individuals lead to power differences during negotiation-based exchanges. Notwithstanding the intuitive nature of the Thye et al. (2006) proposition, the current research program found that the combined view of lower status actors can outweigh the view of a higher status actor. This finding is potentially important in understanding the way leaders can, themselves, be persuaded towards alternative decision outcomes in teams. Moreover, in the current research program combined member view appeared to be an important circuit breaker for the potentially negative aspects of team leaders unduly influencing team outcomes because of their status. This finding indicates that research into the effect of status differences in teams should also empirically explore the counter effect that the combined (or aggregated) influence of lower status actors has on the influence of a higher status actor during negotiations.

In summary, the findings of this research study suggest that in developing an integrated theory of top level team process effectiveness, the broader phenomenon of underlying leadership style characteristics may not have been accorded sufficient weight in the extant research. The strength of the relationships identified in this study between leadership style and teams reaching consensual commitment about decision outcomes suggests the influence of leadership style is worthy of further more focused exploration empirically in future research on top level team effectiveness. This conclusion appears to be further supported by the findings which are emerging from more contemporary research in the area of leadership. This research is now discussed.
9.7.3 The Role of Leadership in Team Decision-Making

The current research program offers important insights into the practical aspects of leadership style in terms of the impact which team leaders have in top level team decision-making. The findings of the current research program lend strong support to the importance of the two transformational leadership principles identified by Bass (1990) which are concerned with motivating followers at an individual level. These behaviours are intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. Where the leaders in this study were committed to and successful in building consensual commitment, an emphasis on these two principles was present to a high degree.

It was clear during the observations of team processes that effective resolution of dissent within the teams relied on attention by leaders to engaging members in meaningful discussion around issues, and ensuring all views (even if discordant) were heard and considered by the team in a constructive way. In contrast to the positive role played by attention to individual considerations, the current research program found that where teams failed to reach consensual commitment, team leaders invariably dealt with team members in quite a transactional way, where there was considerably less emphasis on relationship aspects.

In this sense, the findings of this study strike a chord with Yukl’s (1998) research on leadership, where he emphasises the individual consideration dimension as perhaps the most important aspect of transformational leadership, in an enduring sense. Podsakoff et al. (1990) similarly refer to effective consultation as an example of transformational leaders choosing to go beyond the boundaries of their roles. There is also parallels with Gardner’s (1990) emphasis on transformational leaders having commitments beyond the self, and in Bass & Steidlmeier’s (1999) critique of pseudo-transformational leaders, where they observe that authentic transformational leadership is vested less in being charismatic, and more in having interpersonal approaches which truly engage followers.
Lane and Klenke’s (2004) Ambiguity Tolerance Interface (ATI) model predicts whether leaders will display transformational leadership behaviours of creativity and adaptability. Lane and Klenke’s work begins to provide a link between social cognitive theory (McCormick, 2001) and leadership theory. The current research program establishes that the degree of relationship emphasis which a leader exhibits in their approach with followers (team members) is a key consideration, both cognitively and behaviourally. While characteristics such as creativity and adaptability are aspects of this, the current research program indicates that in the specific context of working with decision-making teams, personal leadership values about inclusiveness and power sharing may play a more important role in determining team cohesion around decision outcomes.

Notwithstanding the continuing focus on individual characteristics and behaviours in leadership research, there have also been important recent studies into organisational antecedents which potentially influence the way leaders lead their teams. The implications of the current research program’s findings about how leadership style can be influenced organisationally are now discussed.

9.7.3.1 Organisational Influence on Leadership Style

The issue of whether and how organisations can influence the leadership style adopted by their leaders has been receiving recent attention in the research.

Shivers-Blackwell (2004: 41) has integrated role theory (Merton, 1957) with transformational/transactional leadership theory (Bass, 1985), to address the important question of why leaders in the same organisational context can adopt different leadership styles. In this sense, she seeks to look beyond factors about leaders as individuals, to the influence of perceived organisational messages on leadership style. Shivers-Blackwell proposes that a leader’s “role set” is influenced by their perception of organisational structure, culture and supervisor expectations, which in turn influence their perception of interdependence with other leaders. She proposes that a perception of an interdependent role set influences leaders towards transformational leadership behaviours, whereas a perceived independent role set influences
leaders towards transactional behaviour. Shivers-Blackwell identifies leader self monitoring (Nelson & Quick, 1994) and leader locus of control (Howell & Avolio 1993) as moderating factors in this relationship.

While Shivers-Blackwell’s (2004) theory has not been empirically tested, it is consistent with a key finding in the current research program that leadership style acts as an independent variable in top level team decision-making effectiveness. Shivers-Blackwell’s theory is important in that it infers perceived organisational expectations influence leadership style-in-use, which in turn influences team processes and outcomes. Torpman (2004) also found that the combination of organisational and personal identities can cause decision-making problems where there is a lack of overlap between them. In empirical testing, Torpman found that an insufficiently developed understanding of the organisation’s decision premises can result in leaders replacing the organisation’s values and identities with their own.

Dionne et al. (2004) have examined the prospective conceptual link between leadership style and team process at a more practical level, and propose that transformational leadership styles should positively predict team decision-making performance. They point in particular to the fact that transformational leadership style emphasises positive and functional team conflict management, communication, creation of a shared vision, empowerment of team members, and intellectual engagement. While the Dionne et al. (2004) theory has also not been empirically tested, it serves as a further pointer to an interest in leadership style as a factor in predicting team process and outcome orientation at a more fine-grained level. The influence of leadership style was also a key finding in the current research program which, in contrast to the Dionne et al. theory, was grounded in an authentic setting.

In summary, the current research program provides an interesting empirical dimension to recent theory development about the impact of underlying leadership style on team decision-making behaviour. Albeit within a substantive setting and context, the current research program found that underlying leadership style influences not only the type of decision-making processes which are likely to be adopted within teams, but also the type of decision outcomes which teams will reach. The current research program’s findings about the link
between transformational leadership style and a partnership-building orientation within top level teams adds a potentially important new dimension to the impact of leadership style at an applied level, especially in knowledge industry settings.

The extant literature establishes the importance of exchange networks based on partnerships for organisational effectiveness in knowledge industries (Pettigrew & Fenton, 2000). This proposition suggests, therefore, that the relationship between transformational leadership style and relational (partnership-based) exchange networks is an important area for further exploration empirically in leadership research. The proposition arising from the current research program that individual leader style within top level teams has a broader impact on organisational exchange dynamics has important implications for the literature and future research.

9.7.4 Organisational Design and Adaptation

The current research program took a voluntarist rather than determinist view of organisational adaptation (Weick, 1969). In this regard, the study was based on the premise that leadership initiative - for example through top level decision-making - can make a difference to how organisations adapt, rather than organisations being subservient to environmental factors (Amason & Mooney, 1999). In particular, the current research program acknowledged Hrebiniak and Joyce’s (1985) pragmatic view on this issue, namely that entities respond according to where they perceive themselves to be along a maximum choice: minimum choice continuum.

Contemporary research directions in organisational design for knowledge industries indicate a continuing interest in more organic and flexible, network-based paradigms, where the importance of cross organisational relationship-building is central to effectiveness.
9.7.4.1 Network Design and Organisational Effectiveness

Current research into organisational design and adaptation continues to question the mechanistic paradigms of classical theorists. An important consideration in this trend has been the recognition that collective action through organisational networks is increasingly important, as entities try to develop a more nimble character in dealing with environmental change.

In her “corporations as cities” metaphor, Dickerson (2004: 533) refers to the corporation as being both a collection of mini-institutions, and part of a larger institution. In this sense, she rejects the corporation as fortress metaphor, in favour of it being “a series of networks bounded by structure”. Within Dickerson’s model, a focus on the network’s richest (most relevant) nodes guides the organisation’s actions in relation to its environment. Along similar lines, Hill, Weistroffer and Aiken (2005: 59) focused on the information processing requirements of firms in knowledge industries, referring to the “technetronic” changes faced by a number of sectors, including the education sector. In study simulations, Hill et al. (2005: 65) found the emergent network design to be superior in information processing by a “superordinate factor” of 28%. Hill and his colleagues posit the eventual demise of the classical theory of organisational design, because of “its inability to accommodate the sociological change engendered by the information age”.

In a related contemporary study, Siggelkow and Rivkin (2005) used an innovative technique to examine the enduring but recently neglected question of how environmental turbulence and complexity affect the formal design of organisations. Rather than focusing on interconnectedness between organisational members (as in Hill et al., 2005), the Siggelkow and Rivkin study focused on the degree of interconnectedness between organisational decisions. Firms were conceptualized as systems of interdependent decision choices, where optimal performance comprised a high degree of interaction and integration among decision choices. Siggelkow and Rivkin (2005: 121) concluded that “the crucial matter is not that a firm centralize or decentralize per-se, but that it finds some archetype which permits speedier improvement without completely sacrificing diversity of search”.
The recent extant research, therefore, emphasises the centrality of decision-making to organisational cohesion, and emphasises both the need for decision processes which integrate information from external sources, as well as decision outcomes which integrate with other organisational decisions. The current research program has some parallels with this contemporary research, in that it suggests that the important difference between decision outcomes which are self-centered, compared to those which take account of the needs and impacts on other organisational areas, through the operation of more partnership-based paradigms. Moreover, the findings of the current research program base these propositions very specifically in the context of decisions which involve turbulent environments, where both client needs and industry operating conditions are in flux, and difficult to predict.

The implications of the current research program in the dual contexts of organisational design and adaptation are now discussed.

9.7.4.2 Organisational Design and Unpredictable Environments

The findings of the current research program have important parallels with contemporary research being conducted into organisational design for turbulent environments.

The studies by Hill et al. (2005) and Siggelkow and Rivkin (2005) point to the importance in knowledge industry settings of connecting in a cohesive way both organisational knowledge and organisational decisions. The current research program confirms the important role which top level decision-making teams play in both of these phenomena. The current research program found that team process orientation strongly influenced the information search activity and capacity of the study teams, as well as their ability and preparedness to link together their internal and external knowledge sources.

This research program also found that overall team outcome orientation was related to patterns in the way teams dealt with a series of decisions over a lengthy period. These patterns, in turn, had implications for the cohesiveness developed by teams around their decision outcomes. Where teams were building partnership-based relationships towards other organisational areas,
there was evidence of a high level of connection and consistency between individual decisions. By contrast, where teams took a transactional view about decisions involving other organisational areas, there was more emphasis on treating each new decision independently from other decisions, and more on its own merits.

In the current research program, both process and outcome orientation of teams were seen to influence the nature of the relationships which teams constructed with other organisational areas, and therefore with the type of networks they built over time. The current research program also suggests that it is important for organisations to foster, through organisational design, the development of a partnership-building dynamic between top level teams, especially in rapidly changing environmental conditions. Moreover, an important additional finding in the current research program - which has not emerged in the extant research - is the important role played by the perspective of team members (as distinct from team leaders) in influencing the level of information search by top level teams and, therefore, the extent to which decisions take into account the needs of other organisational areas.

These findings have potential implications for the literature on organisational design in the context of effective adaptation. These implications are now discussed.

9.7.4.3 Organisational Design as an Influence on Adaptation

The finding in the current research program about the importance of job design characteristics in managerial positions provides an interesting dimension to the understanding of organisational adaptation. The intelligence offered by the current research study relates to the strong correlation found between top level team member underlying job roles, and their attitude towards the formation of organisational networks.

Managerial job design is potentially an area for further organisational design research. From the current research program’s findings, it can be logically extrapolated that if organisations define the day to day roles of top level team members in lateral (cross-boundary), rather than vertical (within-boundary) terms, this is likely to create the antecedent conditions for more
partnership-based relationship paradigms within top level team decision-making. This dynamic will, in turn, create the conditions for more cohesive and effective organisational adaptation, through top level teams considering the impact of environmental change on areas which they partner with, as well as on their own immediate areas of responsibility.

In effect, the current research program suggests underlying job role definition for top managers is one of McCabe’s (1990) manipulable parameters of organisational design, and should be an area of greater focus in future research about establishing antecedent conditions within organisations which foster cohesive adaptation within changing environments.

9.7.5 Implications for the Literature - Summary

A number of contemporary organisational theorists have identified the need for more practice-based research in the areas impacted by the current research program. Gordon and Yukl (2004) propose greater integration of formal leadership theory research with the practice of applied leadership in organisations. Siggelkow and Rivkin (2005) point to a similar lack of emphasis on the applied aspects of the network organisational design form. Walker at al. (2000) caution about the need for more research on the application of network theory in real-life organisational settings, rather than in controlled simulation environments.

The design of the current research program offered the opportunity to develop applied insight into the way leadership style influences both the process and outcome aspects of top level decision-making behaviour. The program of study identifies important practical ramifications which top level team decision-making has for organisational network creation and maintenance, a key consideration within knowledge industries. This direct relationship has not been established within the research to date.

The findings of the current research program lend support to a number of areas of extant research, including some emerging new perspectives. Key aspects include:
- that commitment to implementing decisions on the part of top level team members is more important than teams merely reaching consensus about decisions
- that negotiation is a key factor in building effective team processes which develop consensual commitment around decision outcomes
- that team member symmetry of interest is an important effectiveness measure in top level team decision-making, and should be reached through negotiation

The findings of the current research program also provide new applied insights in a number of areas of theory and research. Key aspects include:

- the importance of relationship emphasis within teams on effective team processes
- the importance of relationship emphasis within teams on decision outcomes, as they relate to seeking to build external partnerships with other organisational stakeholders
- the central influence of leadership style in determining team processes an outcomes
- the superior role that aggregated team member influence can have over leader influence in some circumstances in determining team outcomes

The current research program also infers a potentially new dimension to the understanding of leadership style and managerial job design as factors in organisational effectiveness. This dimension relates to the influence which the design of top level managerial positions has on the decision disposition of their occupants, and in turn on the decision outcomes of top level teams.

The indication in the current research program that organisations may be able to pro-actively influence their ability to act cohesively when dealing with changing environments is not new in itself. However the current research program offers some fresh insights in this area. The current research program provides a new and potentially important perspective that leadership style and managerial job design may ultimately influence the adaptive capacity of organisations.
CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the current program of research was to make an original contribution to the theory about the effect of top level team decision-making behaviour on exchange relationships between organisational units, and to reflect on the implications of this for organisational adaptation. The program of research also explored the question of how an innovative research methodology such as grounded theory could make an original contribution to the body of understanding in this area.

This chapter provides a summary of the research study, including the methodology adopted to examine the research questions; the research sample; and data collection and analysis procedures. Conclusions emerging from the current program of research are also outlined, as well as limitations. Finally, the chapter proposes a number of implications which the findings of this program of study have for the literature, organisational practice, and future research.

10.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current program of research was undertaken in the context of the challenges faced by so-called knowledge industries in dealing with environmental uncertainty and change. In this regard, the extant research identifies the importance in knowledge industries of organisations having strong internal knowledge networks, and a capacity to link areas of expertise together in a timely and flexible way, to meet changing customer needs (Limerick et al., 2002).
The extant research on organisational effectiveness indicates that entities in knowledge industries must develop partnership-based exchange relationships between organisational units. This capacity *inter alia* provides the ability to adapt in a cohesive way to changes in the external environment (Pettigrew & Fenton, 2000). The particular relevance of the current program of research was that it examined the role of top level team decision-making in shaping the larger phenomenon of exchange relationships between organisational units. The findings of this research also provide a basis on which to extrapolate about the implications of top level team decision-making behaviour for effective organisational adaptation. The findings of the research invite further empirical study about the implications of top level team exchange behaviour for organisational adaptation and organisational design.

Within the context of knowledge industries, the substantive research question was:

**How does top level team decision-making behaviour influence exchange relationships between organisational units?**

The research also sought to make a methodological contribution to research practice, by using an innovative methodology to explore a well researched area. In response to a call from the research community for greater practice-based emphasis in studies about organisational exchange, the methodological question the current research program addressed was:

**How will an innovative methodology such as grounded theory provide new insight into organisational exchange dynamics?**

The higher education sector in Australia was chosen as the particular substantive setting for the current research program. Australian universities are considered to be very good examples of entities within the knowledge sector which face particular challenges developing relationship-based exchange networks, because of their size and complexity. Moreover, this is a sector facing considerable environmental turbulence associated with deregulation of markets, global competition, reduced public funding, and changing client needs and expectations.
10.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A review of the extant literature was undertaken to frame the current research program, and this in turn also informed the research design. In particular, the extant literature indicated a need for a stronger practice-based emphasis in researching the study areas (Walker et al., 2000), to balance the essentially theoretically based approaches of the recent past.

Against this background, a reflexive research approach was chosen for the current research program. This approach allowed the researcher to observe first hand the dynamics and machinations involved when top level teams went about the decision-making process, and to identify behavioural characteristics over time, and under a variety of conditions. A reflexive research design was considered to be particularly appropriate, in view of the indication in the extant research that top level team decision-making behaviour is highly situation specific (Edmondson et al., 2003).

Notwithstanding the arguments for a reflexive research design in the current research program, the literature review did identify a substantial body of extant research in the study areas, which could not be ignored. For this reason, a mixed-method research framework was chosen. This framework encompassed predominantly qualitative research methods, while allowing quantitatively-based data to be incorporated around the extant literature. In this sense, the integration of quantitative data served an important triangulation purpose. The mixed-method approach was applied in the collection of data, whereas the data analysis methodology was qualitative. This aspect is discussed in more detail in Section 10.2.

Because the current research program sought to understand the social world of the research subjects from an inside perspective, a reflexive research methodology was considered appropriate. This approach allowed the researcher to progressively re-focus the study in the context of relationships and phenomena as they emerged. A grounded theory-like epistemological approach was adopted (Mason, 2002), which employed an open-ended logic (Jorgensen, 1989) in support of the reflexive capacity which was sought for the program of
study. With this research design, the social world of the research subjects was able to be understood from their own perspective, through observation and analysis of research subject behaviour under a variety of conditions, within natural settings.

10.3.1 Research Sample

The approach to choosing the sample frame incorporated purposive and theoretical aspects, within a three-tiered sampling construct.

In the context of the research question, the initial sample frame was purposive (Zikmund, 1997), in that it sought to identify study groups with similar underlying organisational roles and similar environmental challenges, but based in institutions with different organisational design characteristics. This approach satisfied key aspects of the substantive prescription for the study.

Using a purposive approach, one administrative division with a similar organisational role was chosen from each of two Australian universities. The two universities were chosen on the basis of physical accessibility for the researcher, a key consideration in qualitative studies (Bryman, 1988). Two top level teams were chosen from each of the institutions concerned. This was again a purposive sample, designed to select teams with comparable organisational responsibilities, and similar environmental challenges. From within the four top level teams identified for the study, a purposive approach was again taken to choosing study subjects, in that teams were only included in the study if all team members indicated their agreement to participate. Because of the nature of studying team behaviour, it was imperative that all team members agreed to be involved.

As the study progressed, a theoretical sampling technique (Glaser & Strauss 1967) was applied, whereby the researcher progressively adjusted the focus of the research in accordance with the relationships and phenomena which were emerging as being qualitatively important.
Using this three-tiered approach to the sample frame, the study teams chosen for the current research program represented approximately a 5% sample of all such teams with administrative responsibilities within similarly sized Australian universities, and a 25% sample of such teams within the two institutions chosen. This approach was considered to provide an appropriate and realistic balance of logistical limiting and delimiting factors (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), within the substantive prescription for the study.

10.3.2 Data Collection Procedures

The research program comprised three separate but interlocking studies. In one study, contextual qualitative data for each study team were gathered through interviews with the gatekeepers for the study. This study provided a rich comparative picture of the four study teams in terms of their demographical, organisational and team characteristics, as well as an understanding of how their context changed over the course of the research program.

In the second and main study, qualitative data were collected by the researcher through first-hand observation of the study teams within their natural decision-making settings. The researcher took the role of detached observer in attending the meetings of all four study teams over a 6-12 month period for each team. Qualitative data were also gathered through confidential interviews with team members to clarify and further understand team dynamics from an insider perspective.

In the final study, quantitative data about team leadership styles were gathered by administration of a recognised measurement instrument in this area (Podsakoff et al., 1999; Podsakoff et al., 1984). This study provided the basis for developing a picture of team leader characteristics, as perceived by team members in a general sense, rather than just within the specific decision-making team setting.

A key aspect of the data analysis was the qualitative triangulation of data from Study 2 (the principle study) with data from Studies 1 and 3 as the research program unfolded. This process provided the framework for building grounded theory.
10.3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

Consistent with the qualitative nature of the research design, data were analysed as they were gathered, through an iterative process of observe - analyse - re-observe. Using this approach, a progressive story line was developed, which represented the gradual construction of researcher understanding about how the study teams behaved.

The story line technique was central to grounded theory development. Through an iterative data analysis process, successive approximation technique (Applebaum, 1978) was used to establish a progressive understanding of individual team behaviour. This technique was facilitated by coding and reading qualitative data at increasing levels of abstraction (Mason, 2002), and by selectively re-directing the focus of the study as important relationship and phenomena emerged.

Analytic comparison technique (Ragin, 1987) was adopted for comparing behaviour between the study groups. Using method of agreement and method of difference procedures (Ragin, 1987), an informed story line was developed about the comparative behaviour of the four teams. Through analysis of team behaviour under various conditions, comparative pattern matrices were able to be developed, which reflected a behavioural picture of the four teams. Data patterning was an innovative technique employed in the current research program, and was important as it allowed the qualitative data to be categorised nomothetically, and analysed using recognised statistical analysis tools. In this way, correlations which were found to be important in the data played a key role in the development of grounded theory.

During the data analysis process, the influence of team leaders emerged as a central consideration. Qualitative data about this phenomenon were triangulated with quantitative leadership style data to confirm the findings which were emerging about the role of team leaders within the context of grounded theory development.
10.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The data analysis process identified four key categories which explained top level team behaviour. These categories represented phenomena which occurred at an increasing level of abstraction.

10.4.1 Higher Order Categories

Two higher order categories which related to top level team behaviour were identified as being team process orientation and team outcome orientation. The data analysis procedures identified particular factors within each of these higher order categories, as well as qualitatively important relationships between factors in some cases.

In terms of team process orientation, the study found inter alia that team leaders were instrumental in setting a climate for teams, in which members felt comfortable in disagreeing and dissenting. The study also found that team leader attitude to constructively managing dissent was an important factor in team members reaching consensual commitment around decision outcomes. These findings were important in the context of Amason’s (1996) proposal that for effective decision-making, top level teams must strive for consensus and commitment on every decision.

In terms of outcome orientation, the current research established that particular factors contributed markedly to top level teams having a partnership-based orientation towards clients and other organisational areas. The study found that the degree to which team leaders were partnership-based in intent was related to the degree they placed emphasis on relationship-building in their overall leadership style. Along similar lines, the degree of partnership-based intent displayed by team members in decision-making was directly related to the degree their day to day job roles emphasised relationship-building considerations.
The current research program findings also indicated that, while team leader intent had a strong influence on decision outcomes, the combined intent of team members could sway decision to a different type of outcome to that of the leader’s intent.

10.4.2 Near-Core Categories

In the current program of study, two near core categories of findings emerged. These near-core categories were related to the overall disposition of the top level teams towards clients and other organisational units, as reflected in their decision-making behaviour. The near-core categories were relational disposition and transactional disposition.

Where teams were identified as having a relational disposition in their behaviour, they displayed an overriding tendency towards a partnership-based intent in decision outcomes. Just as these teams placed greater emphasis on relationship considerations where it came to issues involving clients and other organisational areas, these teams also displayed a higher commitment to relationship considerations within their internal team processes.

By contrast, where teams were found to display a transactional disposition, the emphasis in their decision-making was on dealing with issues in a more arms-length and expedient way, which reflected no emphasis on developing partnership-like dynamics with the other party concerned. In these situations, there was also less attention given to relationship considerations within their internal team processes. This omission in team process behaviour often led to dissenting members feeling their views had not been adequately considered during decision-making discussions, and hence, resulted in their being uncommitted to decision outcomes.

It was noteworthy in the current research that a distinctively different pattern of statistical correlations was found when teams displayed an overall partnership intent, compared to an independent intent in their decision-making. Because of their reliability and consistency, the contrast in these patterns was taken to indicate a difference in underlying disposition on the
part of the teams. Through identifying correlations between factors within the patterns, disposition was categorised as either relational on the one hand, or transactional on the other.

10.4.3 Core Category and a Basic Social Process

As indicated in Section 10.3.2, the near core categories of relational disposition and transactional disposition were found to have distinctively different and, in many cases, opposite characteristics. This finding indicated that these two near-core categories of disposition were in fact two parts of a single phenomenon, which occurred at a higher level of abstraction.

This research study identified that the disposition of top level teams during decision-making provided insight more broadly about the exchange model the teams adopted for their interaction with clients, and the larger university community. In particular, top level team disposition in decision-making was found to influence the type of exchange relationships which top level teams sought to develop over time with other organisational units.

The extant research identifies that through repetition of a particular type of exchange behaviour, organisational actors over time create patterns in their exchange relationships, which take the form of dyads, so called because of the predictable and embedded characteristics there relationships assume (Lincoln, 1986). Based on the extant research about exchange theory, a core category was therefore identified within top level team decision-making behaviour, which reflected a basic social process of Dyadic Decision-Making.

10.5 CONCLUSIONS

The substantive research question addressed by the current research program was:

How does top level team decision-making behaviour influence exchange relationships between organisational units?
The current research program concluded that there was a basic social process of dyadic decision-making present within top level team decision-making behaviour. Moreover, a grounded theory emerged from the current research program, which identified factors which influenced whether top level teams developed relational, as compared to transactional exchange dyads between each other. The two independent variables found in the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making relate to the degree of relationship emphasis which team leader’s adopt in their leadership styles, and the degree of relationship emphasis adopted by team members, as influenced by their underlying job role definitions. Through intervening and moderating variables within the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making, these independent variables ultimately shape the dependent variable of interest in the current research program, namely the type of exchange relationships which top level teams adopt in relation to other organisational units.

The current research program also sought to make a methodological contribution to research practice, by using an innovative methodology to explore a well researched area of organisation studies. In this context, the study addressed the following methodological question:

**How will an innovative methodology such as grounded theory provide new insight into organisational exchange dynamics?**

Qualitative research design is recognised as particularly relevant for understanding phenomena involving the interpersonal dynamics which are present within specific social groups, and social situations (Bryman, 2001). The experience of the current research study confirms that qualitative research design is very relevant within organisational settings, particularly where the focus is on researching the behaviour of social groups which is expected to be situation specific, and therefore needs to be examined over a lengthy time horizon, and under a range of circumstances.

The experience of the current research study indicates that grounded theory methodology provides the responsiveness and flexibility to allow phenomena and their relationships to be identified and validated through a process of observation, analysis and re-observation of study
group behaviours, under a range of similar, as well as different circumstances. In this research program, it was unlikely that a logical positivist research design would have provided a means of understanding the phenomena at a similarly fine level of detail to that which was able to be developed through the grounded theory-based approach.

A particular strength of the grounded theory methodology within the context of the current research question was the insight it provided into the subtleties of top level team behaviour, and the implications this had for development of broader organisational relationships and, potentially, cohesive organisational adaptation.

10.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The grounded theory methodology adopted for the current research program identified a number of factors which might have potentially influenced the findings in the data analysis. As is often the case in qualitatively based studies, these factors were identified by the research participants themselves. While the current research study methodology did not provided for these to be tested specifically, each has been addressed in Chapter 7 to reach a tentative conclusion as to their potential effect on the findings of the current research program. On the basis of this preliminary qualitative analysis, none of these was seen to have been as important as the factors which were found to have a qualitatively significant influence within the data analysis process.

The researcher did conclude, however, that these factors operating in combination may in some cases have established a level of pre-disposition on the part of the study groups to a particular type of behaviour. Notwithstanding this possibility, the qualitative analysis of these factors indicated that their expected intuitive impact was not supported by the data findings, which tended to discount them as key influencing factors. However, their combined effect was not able to be qualitatively tested. These factors were:
- differences in membership demography between the teams, including experience levels and gender balance
- differences in diversity of team member roles within the teams
- differences in underlying organisational roles for the teams themselves
- differences in cultural settings between the teams

More generally, there may have been issues about differences in team size that had an effect on the findings in the study, however this was not raised as an issue by participants, and the researcher did not become aware of it being a consideration. While the study design provided for the impact of personality mix within teams to emerge as a factor in a qualitative way, there was no provision for this issue to be explored more empirically.

In terms of applicability of findings, the limitation of the study is associated with its being grounded within a particular industry, and indeed within a particular administrative segment of that industry. A caution would, therefore, need to be made about the extent to which the findings are more generalisable within organisations per-se. The study findings do however invite more empirical research as to the broader applicability of the findings, and the degree to which the phenomena identified are germane to large organisations which are segmented in design, and face environmental turbulence.

### 10.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LITERATURE

The literature review indicates that research over the past thirty years in areas relevant to the current research program has lacked a strongly reflexive dimension, and there has been a call generally by researchers for greater understanding of organisational exchange under authentic, real-life conditions (Annen, 2003; Walker et al., 2000), as well as a greater integration of theoretical and practice-based research (Siggelkow & Rivkin, 2005). The current research findings make an original contribution to applied exchange theory, in particular the role that top level team decision-making behaviour plays in shaping broader exchange relationships between organisational units.
The findings of the current research provide a level of empirical support for a number of areas of emerging theory, which had not been tested at the time of the study. One such area is the emerging view about the importance of organisations seeking to influence leadership styles adopted by their internal leaders (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004; Torpman, 2004). The grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making indicates that leadership style acts as an independent variable in determining top level team decision-making behaviour and outcomes. Moreover, the grounded theory suggests that the four factors in Edmondson et al.’s (2003) model of team effectiveness (information symmetry, symmetry of interest, power sharing, and psychological safety) may, in fact, be very closely associated with the phenomenon of the degree of relationship emphasis which leaders adopt within leadership styles. This relationship would tend to add weight to the call in the extant literature for organisations to more overtly influence leadership styles in use.

Another area of untested theory which the current research findings support is the view emerging in the literature that commitment to implementation is more important as an outcome from top level team decision-making than teams reaching consensus about decisions (Kopeikina, 2006). The current research program concluded that commitment to implementing decisions influences the strength of partnership-based exchange relationships which top level teams create with other organisational units.

The findings of a basic social process of Dyadic Decision-Making provide a potentially new basis for reflecting on Thye et al.’s recent proposition (2006) that status differences between individuals lead to power differences during negotiation-based exchanges. At least within a top level team context, the current research program suggests that the combined view of lower status actors can outweigh the view of a higher status actor in determining decision outcomes.

Finally, in the area of organisational exchange, notwithstanding examples of some caution emerging in the extant literature about the real value of internal networks to members (Hwang, 2005; Goerzen & Beamish, 2005), the central emphasis in the current research program was the value of partnership-based internal exchange relationships within the context of organisational adaptation. The potential implications of the grounded theory of Dyadic
Decision-Making for cohesive adaptation suggest that assessing the value of internal networks only in payoff terms for individual members - rather than for the organisation as a whole - may be a somewhat limited and narrow perspective on the importance of this phenomenon.

10.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICE

The grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making has important implications for practice. Based on the conclusions from the current research program, two important principles arise in this regard:

**Principle 1:**
When leaders of top level teams have a strong relationship emphasis within their leadership styles, relational (partnership-based) exchange dynamics between organisational units will be enhanced through top level team decision-making behaviour.

There is a body of emerging research suggesting that, while leadership style is an individual phenomenon, it can be influenced through the cues which leaders take from organisational messages about culture and expectations. Shivers-Blackwell (2004: 41) proposes that a leader’s “role set” is influenced by their perception of organisational structure, culture and expectations set by superiors. These perceptions, in turn, influence the view of leaders *inter alia* about their level of interdependence with other leaders. Along similar lines, Torpman (2004) found that an insufficiently developed understanding of the organisation’s decision premises can result in leaders replacing the organisation’s values and identities with their own. The findings of the current research study support the emerging view about the importance in practice for organisations to influence top level team leaders towards having a strong relationship emphasis within their leadership approach.
Principle 2:
When members of top level teams have a strong relationship emphasis within their underlying job roles, relational (partnership-based) exchange dynamics between organisational units will be enhanced through top level team decision-making behaviour.

The current research program indicates that within knowledge industries, organisations should seek to optimise the relationship emphasis in the job role definitions of members of top level teams. Job design is inherently within the control of organisations, though there has been relatively little emphasis in the research about job design in managerial level roles. If organisations take the view that job design is one of the manipulable parameters of organisational design (McCabe, 1990), any move to better balance traditional vertical (within-boundary) job definitions with more lateral (across-boundary) job definitions will positively shape the dynamics within top level teams, as they relate to partnership-building behaviours.

10.9 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The importance of exchange networks has been an area of increasing attention in extant organisational studies. However, a number of writers (Passos & Caetano, 2005; Walker et al., 2000) have pointed to the fact that much of the research to date in this area has been based on controlled experiments, or on simulating exchange situations between individuals and groups under controlled conditions. While the findings of such positivist studies are interesting, the weakness identified by the researchers themselves is the uncertainty about the applicability of their findings to real life situations, in which individual motivations and influences are more multi-plex than under simulated conditions.

The indication in the extant research that exchange behaviour takes on a set of embedded characteristics over time (Lincoln, 1986), suggests there is an important role for more qualitatively based longitudinal studies in identifying the impact of exchange relationships on organisational effectiveness. Such a longitudinal capacity was not able to be incorporated
within the logistical parameters for the current research program. However the findings of the current research suggest that this would be an appropriate focus for future research.

The current research program identifies two areas in particular which are worthy of further research. The first area relates to the indication that decision-making patterns influence development of exchange dyads between top level teams and, by extension, between organisational units. Because of the logistical limitations for the current research program, it was not feasible to test the practical implications longitudinally of the impact of more relational exchange networks within the organisations involved. The focus of the current research program was on the behaviour of the top level teams involved, and not on whether/how this behaviour influenced the behaviour of other top level teams within the organisations concerned.

A logistical limitation of the current research program was that the reciprocity dynamic (Deckop et al., 2003) of decision-making dyads could not be tested within the context of its longer term effect on cohesive organisational adaptation. An extrapolation of the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making proposes that this is an area for further research to explore empirically the relationship between exchange dynamics and organisational adaptation. In this context, it would be of interest to research the impact of particular decision-making behaviours of top level teams on the reciprocated decision-making behaviours of other top level teams. An important aspect of this would be to understand the effect of a particular type of overture in one top level team’s decision-making behaviour on the response from fellow top level teams. Such a study, focusing on patterns of top level team exchange over time and under different exchange models (namely relational and transactional), would be informative in understanding the practical impact of reciprocity and organisational citizenship forces on the operation of exchange dyads and, by extension, on cohesive organisational adaptation.

The extrapolation of the grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making for organisational design also invites a second area for further empirical research. The current research study underlines the fact that leadership style is situation specific, and gives support to recent research indicating that the approach of individual leaders in their roles can be influenced
organisationally (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004; Dionne et al., 2004). However, it is note worthy that the emergent research in this area has not been empirically tested. Given the current grounded theory and the propositions it presents for organisational practice, it would appear that further empirical research into ways organisations can influence leadership practice through design, cultural, and other considerations would be timely and informative.

In particular, identifying mechanisms whereby organisations can encourage greater relationship emphasis on the part of top level team leaders would provide important practical insight into the creation of antecedent conditions which foster more effective organisational adaptation through the operation of the Dyadic Decision-Making model. The grounded theory suggests that from an organisational design point of view, through influencing team leader behaviours and team member job role definitions towards a greater relationship emphasis (in both cases), organisations will positively influence the development of relational exchange dyads between their top level teams. The proposition to be empirically researched is that this dynamic, in turn, will positively influence organisational adaptation.

In terms of research methodology, the current research program applied a social-constructionist approach to researching the area of exchange relationships, as they relate to top level teams within organisations. Using a reflexive research design, the current research program was able to identify patterns which occurred over time within the social lives of top level teams, as they considered issues related to their changing environments. Because of the qualitative nature of the research methodology adopted for the current research program, the researcher was able to understand, at an applied level, the way in which situation specific behaviours by top level teams took on an embedded pattern, and the implications of this for broader exchange relationships between organisational units. The experience and findings of the current research program confirm the role which qualitatively-based research can have in understanding the implications of exchange behaviour in an applied sense, under authentic organisational conditions. In particular, story line technique and behavioural patterning emerged as being two innovative features of the current methodology which are worthy of further consideration within organisational studies.
10.10 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The current research program provided the opportunity to understand more fully the impact which top level team decision-making behaviour has on exchange relationships between organisational units. The study concludes that top level team decision-making is a complex phenomenon, which is influenced over time by a multitude of factors. Notwithstanding this complexity, the findings of the current research study do give cause for optimism that entities can be proactive in shaping exchange dynamics between organisational units through influencing the relationship emphasis within leadership style and job design. Moreover, there is an indication arising from the current research study that such action may, in turn, positively influence how cohesively organisations adapt. This is identified as an area for further exploration which is invited by the findings of the current program of research.

Australian universities are good examples of large and complex organisations within knowledge-based industries, which currently face environmental upheaval and uncertainty. It is hoped that the finding of a grounded theory of Dyadic Decision-Making provides insights about organisational practice which will positively influence exchange relationships within this industry sector, within the context of effective organisational adaptation. It is further hoped that the current research program’s findings are of interest to other organisations in industry sectors with similar characteristics, and facing similar challenges.

Finally, the current research program took a voluntarist view of the relationship between organisations and their environments. The study findings provide a further dimension to the understanding of how organisational action has the potential to markedly influence organisational outcomes, in the face of potentially dominant environmental conditions.
REFERENCE LIST


Reference List


Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.
Appendix A

Dear Paul,

This email is to confirm I have given you approval to conduct the following study in this Division:

A qualitative investigation of the relationship between organisational design and decision-making effectiveness.

I understand that the study involves qualitative research with two managerial decision making groups. I am satisfied that I have been briefed in full as to the background, rationale, objectives and methodology for the study.

Best wishes for your study.

Regards,

Paul

This email is to confirm I have given you approval to conduct the following study in this Division:

A qualitative investigation of the relationship between organisational design and decision-making effectiveness.

I understand that the study involves qualitative research with two managerial decision making groups. I am satisfied that I have been briefed in full as to the background, rationale, objectives and methodology for the study.
Appendix B

A qualitative investigation of the relationship between organisational design and decision making effectiveness.

Researcher: Name: Paul ROWLAND
School: Graduate School of Management, Griffith University
Contact Phone: 0419704236
Contact Email: p.rowland@qut.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include observation by the researcher of a decision making team of which I am a member; one-on-one interviews with the researcher between team meetings; my completing a survey questionnaire about team climate & team leader style.
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the researcher or the research supervisor;
- I understand I am free to withdraw at any time, without reason/penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3875 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the study. My decision has been made without coercion, and independently of what other members of the team have decided.

Name

Signature

Date / /
Appendix C

Dear Paul

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the provisional ethical clearance awarded to your project, "A Qualitative Investigation of the Relationship Between Organisational Design and Decision-Making Effectiveness" (GU Ref No GSM/01/04).

This response has largely addressed the comments and concerns of the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

This is subject to:

* copies of the approvals from the participating universities being provided, once these are available;

* given the recruitment / consent mechanism, the research team impressing upon the team leaders that the consent of team members must be informed (eg they must have time to read the recruitment materials - and should be able to retain their own copy of these materials) and voluntary (eg team members must be free to make a decision free of coercion, despite what other members of their team may decide);

* provision of the revised informed consent package (which includes a clear description of the described method of providing feedback / results to team leaders); and

* the basis of this approval is that no commercial-in-confidence / personal information with legal privacy considerations, and no identification of participants will occur in any publication / reporting, the research team must consult with the HREC if this changes.

This decision is also subject to ratification by the Chair of the HREC. However, on this basis (as per the above), the immediate commencement of the research has been authorised. Please provide a response to the above ASAP so this file can be finalised. I will only contact you again about this matter if you fail to provide a timely response to the above or if the Chair raises any additional concerns.

Gary Allen
Manager, Research Ethics
Office for Research
Griffith University
## Appendix D

### Leadership Style Instrument

(Please circle the most correct answer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0= not at all</th>
<th>1= once in a while</th>
<th>2= sometimes</th>
<th>3= fairly often</th>
<th>4= frequently, if not always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Articulates Vision

1. Has a clear understanding of where we are going
   0 1 2 3 4
2. Paints an interesting picture of the future of our group
   0 1 2 3 4
3. Is always seeking new opportunities for the organisation
   0 1 2 3 4
4. Inspires others with his/her plans for the future
   0 1 2 3 4
5. Is able to get others committed to his/her dream
   0 1 2 3 4

#### Provides Appropriate Model

1. Leads by “doing”, rather than simply “telling”
   0 1 2 3 4
2. Provides a good model for me to follow
   0 1 2 3 4
3. Leads by example
   0 1 2 3 4

#### Fosters the Acceptance of Goals

1. Fosters collaboration among work groups
   0 1 2 3 4
2. Encourages employees to be “team players”
   0 1 2 3 4
3. Gets the group to work together for the same goal
   0 1 2 3 4
4. Develops a team attitude and spirit among employees
   0 1 2 3 4

#### High Performance Expectations

1. Shows that he/she expects a lot from us
   0 1 2 3 4
2. Insists on only the best performance
   0 1 2 3 4
3. Will not settle for second best
   0 1 2 3 4

#### Providing Individualised Support

1. Acts without considering my feelings
   0 1 2 3 4
2. Shows respect for my personal feelings
   0 1 2 3 4
3. Behaves in a manner thoughtful of my personal needs
   0 1 2 3 4
Appendices

Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour

Treats me without considering my personal feelings
0 1 2 3 4

**Intellectual Stimulation**
1 Challenges me to think about old problems in new ways
0 1 2 3 4
2 Asks questions that prompt me to think
0 1 2 3 4
3 Has stimulated me to rethink the way I do things
0 1 2 3 4
4 Has ideas that have challenged me to re-examine some of my basic assumptions about my work
0 1 2 3 4

**Contingent Reward Behaviour**
1 My supervisor always gives me positive feedback when I perform well.
0 1 2 3 4
2 My supervisor gives me special recognition when my work performance is especially good.
0 1 2 3 4
3 My supervisor would quickly acknowledge an improvement in the quality of my work
0 1 2 3 4
4 My supervisor commends me when I do a better than average job.
0 1 2 3 4
5 My supervisor personally pays me a compliment when I do outstanding work
0 1 2 3 4
6 My supervisor informs his boss and/or others in the organization when I do outstanding work
0 1 2 3 4
7 If I do well, I know my supervisor will reward me.
0 1 2 3 4
8 My supervisor would do all that (s)he could to help me go as far as I would like to go in this organization if my work was consistently above average.
0 1 2 3 4
9 My good performance often goes unacknowledged by my supervisor.
0 1 2 3 4
10 I often perform well in my job and still receive no praise from my supervisor.
0 1 2 3 4

**Contingent Punishment Behaviour**
1 If I performed at level below that which I was capable of, my supervisor would indicate his/her disapproval.
0 1 2 3 4
2 My supervisor shows his/her displeasure when my work is below acceptable standards.
0 1 2 3 4
3 My supervisor lets me know about it when I perform poorly.
0 1 2 3 4
4 My supervisor would reprimand me if my work was below standard.
0 1 2 3 4
5 When my work is not up to par, my supervisor points it out to me When my work is not up to par, my supervisor points it out to me
0 1 2 3 4
Non-contingent Punishment Behaviour

1. My supervisor frequently holds me accountable for things I have no control over.
   0 1 2 3 4
2. My supervisor is often displeased with my work for no apparent reason.
   0 1 2 3 4
3. My supervisor is often critical of my work even when I perform well
   0 1 2 3 4
4. I frequently am reprimanded by my supervisor without knowing why
   0 1 2 3 4

Non-contingent Reward Behaviour

1. Even when I perform poorly, my supervisor often commends me
   0 1 2 3 4
2. My supervisor is just as likely to praise me when I do poorly as when I do well
   0 1 2 3 4
3. Even when I perform poorly on my job, my supervisor rarely gets upset with me.
   0 1 2 3 4
4. My supervisor frequently praises me even when I don't deserve it. My superior often commends me for work I am not responsible for
   0 1 2 3 4

Citation for the transactional items:

Citation for the transformational items:
373

Appendices

Appendix E:
Leadership Style: Summary of Follower Ratings
Leader 1:
Transformational
Articulates vision
- where we are going
- picture of future
- new opportunities
- inspires others
- gets commitment
Role modelling
- leads by doing
- role modelling
- leads by example
Acceptance of goals
- fosters collaboration
- fosters team approach
- work together
- team attitude & spirit
High perfmnce expecs
- expects a lot
- only the best
- nor settle for second
Individualises support
- doesn’t cnsdr flngs*
- respects feelings
- personal needs
- treats unthoughtfuly*
Intellectual stimulation
- old probs inew ways
- makes me think
- rethink
- examine basic assump

Ratings

Mean (sd)

Leader 2:
Ratings

Mean (sd)

Leader 3:
Ratings

Mean (sd)

Leader 4:
Ratgs

Mean (sd)

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Transactional
Contingent reward
- positive feedback
- special recognition
- ack improvement
- commends
- pays compliments
- informs boss
- will reward me
- help me progress
- good perf un-noted*
- no praise fr good job*
Contingent punishment
- disapproval if poor
- displeasure if poor
- let me know if poor
- reprimand if poor
- points out if poor
Non-conting punshmnt
- accntble for no contrl
- displsr for no reason
- critical of good perf
- reprimnd no reason
Non-contingent reward
- commends poor perfc
- just as likely praise
- rarely upset by poorpraise when not dsvd

*

denotes ‘reverse’ question

α denotes Cronbach’s alpha coefficient

sd denotes standard deviation from mean

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Dyadic Decision-Making: A grounded theory of top level team decision and exchange behaviour.

