

**BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT: A MODEL FOR ORGANISATIONAL
CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGISTS**

by

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I declare that **BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT: A MODEL FOR ORGANISATIONAL CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGISTS** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE

(Mr W H Struwig)

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DATE

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SUMMARY

This qualitative research addressed systems psychodynamic consultation to boundary management. The systemic, dynamic and chaotic aspects of organisational life formed the backdrop against which the research was conducted. The general objective of the research was to describe a relevant consulting model for organisational consulting psychologists related to boundary management. Literature was reviewed in order to describe organisational consulting and organisational boundaries from the systems psychodynamic perspective. Key principles for boundary management consulting were also described.

The objectives of the empirical study were to apply psychodynamic consulting to boundary management and to describe the process. A further objective was to produce research hypotheses about boundary management from both an organisational and a consulting perspective. A case study design was followed. Descriptive data was gathered by means of a participative observer. The data was analysed by means of systems psychodynamic discourse analysis. Ten working hypothesis were produced. These hypotheses culminated into two research hypotheses, describing the primary task of boundary management and boundary management consulting. The first research hypothesis was that the primary task of boundary management is to hold the polarities of integration and differentiation, not allowing the system to become fragmented or overly integrated. The second research hypothesis was that the primary task of the consultant in boundary management consulting is to help the organisation's managing its own boundaries. This is carried out through taking up the role of organisational consultant, performing the consulting tasks and by applying a consulting process. The researcher concluded that boundary management is an

activity of the whole organisation. Boundary management consulting facilitates or supports this organisational activity.

Key terms: Organisational boundaries, boundary management, boundary management consulting, systems psychodynamics.

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH ORIENTATION

This thesis is focused on boundary management consulting as an area of practice in organisational consulting psychology. The primary task of this research is to study the role and tasks of the organisational consulting psychologist in relation to consulting in the said field and to present a set of hypotheses for boundary management.

In this chapter the scientific background to the research, the problem statement and the objectives of the study are provided. In addition, the research design and method is explained. The relevant theories and models of the study are also listed in the chapter. The chapter is concluded with an outline of chapters to follow.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

In the experience of the author, a large number of South African research publications in the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology still represent simple linear paradigms offering research findings that contribute little value to the applied field of organisational consulting. In the last decades a considerable degree of criticism has been leveled against positivistic research, and specifically against constructs that are narrow sighted, simplistic and deterministic (Goldkuhl, 2002). There is a growing cultural divide between research approaches focused on meaning and interpretation, and approaches focused on cause and effect relationships (Blatt & Luyten, 2006; Lewes & Kelemen, 2002). The divide is driven by a growing acceptance that the social, economic and cultural realities of our world are complex and multidimensional

(Kegan, 1994). Castells (2009) raises some of the complex issues we face in the world today: a global financial crisis; new international division of labour; growth of the global criminal economy; large scale exclusion of segments of the global population from networks that accumulate knowledge, wealth and power; religious fundamentalism; re-emergence of ethnic and territorial divides; widespread resorting to violence as a means to protest and dominate; a global environmental crisis; and governments who seem incapable of balancing local demands with global problems. Post modern organisations need to account for this complex environment and consequently change and adapt all the time. Organisations have altered structurally and culturally over the past decades. Schein (2004) explains that organisations have a fundamental drive to survive and that organisational culture ultimately evolves as the organisation learns how to survive in a changing environment. One of the most obvious changes in entities over a period is the way they are structured. There is a movement away from linear hierarchical organisational structures towards social networks. Zack (2000, p.1) describes such an organisation as “individuals interconnected as members of social networks, interpreting, creating, sharing and acting on information and knowledge”. The social network organisation presents a new and different entity to consultants. It raises the importance of interconnections and therefore the importance of relationships and relatedness.

Behavioural sciences have moved, in the last decades, from simple exclusive paradigms toward complex inclusive paradigms that take into account the holistic, systemic, dynamic and chaotic aspects of the social world (Fuqua & Newman, 2002). Organisational consulting psychology will therefore remain relevant as long as it can

draw on thinking frameworks and consulting processes that are able to deal with complexity and the depth of the human experience.

The systems psychodynamic perspective provides a paradigm that deals with both complexity and relationships on a systemic, dynamic and psychological level (Colman & Geller, 1985). A key concept in systems psychodynamics is that of individual, group and organisational boundaries (Lawrence, 1979) which seems to be more relevant than ever in our time. Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008, p.390) write: “Collaboration and partnership are popular discourse in the 21st century... working across boundaries has become increasingly important in a world where organisations are intertwined and interdependent”. They make the point that organisations and institutions are challenged by the task of working across the boundaries of business units, departments, disciplines and hierarchical levels. Boundary management seems to be a substantial part of everyday organisational life. Consultants working in these organisations cannot ignore this reality.

In this study, therefore, organisational boundaries are chosen as the focal point of the consulting stance. Boundary management is viewed as a primary organisational task. The reason for this approach is driven by a fundamental belief that organisational boundaries reflect the essence of the organisation (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005). Every part of the organisational system operates inside and across its own boundaries (Churchman, 1968; Cilliers & Koortzen, 2002). By focussing on boundaries the consultant cannot help working with the organisation as a system of interrelated parts. The approach also focuses the consultation on the relationships between people. Lawrence (1979, p.16) explains that: “Boundaries are necessary in order for human

beings to relate not only to each other but through their institutions. If there are no boundaries, relatedness and relationships are impossible because we become one; lost in each other; lost in institutions, lost in societies". By focussing on relationships the consultant works directly with the essence of the network organisation.

Lawrence (1979) makes the point that a trend in society to move away from the categorisation of people has de-emphasised boundaries. In his view boundaries need to be recognised but must always be open to inspection. The role of the consultant is to work with the management of boundaries and to make teams and leaders aware of boundary management issues (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2002).

Organisational consulting psychologists are faced with many boundary related issues. Boundaries in organisations could be unclear, too small, too loose, too tight, shared, or well defined. Clients may be concerned that they have compromised their boundaries, that they are excluded from a boundary or that certain boundaries are conflicted; they might want to cross a boundary, push it, form one, change one, remove it, understand it, share it, question it, or break down boundaries. Organisational boundaries seem to be a logical focal point for consultants who wish to approach organisations in terms of a complex and systemic paradigm, while systems psychodynamics provide an approach to boundary related organisational issues.

Why would this study be important? Firstly, practical application is critical in the field of organisational consulting psychology as an applied science. Loverage, Willman and Deery (2007), in their article on the development and evolution of the journal *Human Relations*, point out that after sixty years of publication the focus still falls on multidisciplinary approaches that connect social theory to social practice which is

able to contribute towards the well-being of employees and the effectiveness of organisations. Systems psychodynamic theory furnishes consultants with a complex paradigm. There is a need for research and theory that is pragmatic, specific and relevant to the day to day consulting environment. Heracleous (2004) makes exactly this point when he calls for grounded research on organisational boundaries that focuses on the first order perceptions of actors in an organisational context.

This study consequently aims at producing a consulting process and a set of hypotheses, applicable to a wide range of consulting contexts, that could provide a thinking framework to the practising consultant. Secondly, this study is focused on the systemic nature of organisations and brings into practice this focus by concentrating on individual, group and organisational boundaries as a point of engagement. To operationalise complex, systemic thinking about organisations is important and essential if consulting psychology wants to promote itself as a discipline with a holistic and pragmatic contribution to the organisational world.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The concept of organisations as a network of interconnected and interrelated subsystems poses a complex experience to consultants. The organisational consultant is confronted with a range of experiences that need to be distinguished, compared and connected (Oliver, 2005) in order to make sense of the consulting experience. This sense making process is also a sifting process of sorts. This can easily be illustrated by citing typical consulting questions (Dillon, 2003): What part of the organisation should be worked with? Where does a consulting assignment start and where does it end? Who is the client? What is included in the scope and what is excluded? What is really going on? What should and should not be worked with? This sifting process

helps the consultant to translate a holistic, systemic understanding of the organisation into practical workable consulting work. Without this process of “translation” the consultation will never move from the conceptual to the practical. Focusing on the interface between relationships in the organisation, in other words, focusing on boundaries could provide a useful and practical consulting platform that might in fact assist the consultant in balancing the complex conceptual world and the practical consulting world. This is precisely the focus that is proposed in this research. If consultation is focused on organisational boundaries, and specifically on boundary management as a way to make sense of the chaos, one would need to understand how organisations manage their boundaries and how consultants consult with respect to boundary management. This includes the role and tasks of the consultant as well as of the consulting process.

The above problem statement can be translated into the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What is the primary task of boundary management on an organisational level?

Research Question 2: What is the systems psychodynamics of organisational boundary management?

Research Question 3: What is the primary task of boundary management consulting?

Research Question 4: What is the role of the consultant during boundary management consulting?

Research Question 5: What are the tasks of the consultant during boundary management consulting?

Research Question 6: What is the process of boundary management consulting?

1.3 REASEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are formulated in terms of a general objective and a range of specific objectives.

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research is to study organisational boundary management and boundary management consulting, in order to describe a relevant consulting model for organisational consulting psychologists.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The objectives of the literature survey are:

- (a) To describe the systems psychodynamic paradigm as a consulting framework.
- (b) To describe organisational boundaries from a systems psychodynamic perspective and to provide principles for boundary management consulting.

The empirical objectives are:

- (a) To apply a psychodynamic consulting framework to boundary management consulting in practice and to describe the process.

(b) To produce a research hypothesis about boundary management as an organisational task.

(c) To produce a research hypothesis about boundary management as a consulting task.

1.4 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

The paradigm perspective is aimed at providing an overview of the most fundamental beliefs and assumptions that ultimately guide and influence the research. Under this section a brief description of the intellectual climate is given; however a full explanation of the research paradigm (assumptions regarding how the world should be studied), ontology (assumptions about the nature of reality) and epistemology (assumptions about what forms of knowledge considered scientific) is furnished in Chapter 4 (Lewis & Kelemen, 2002). The market of intellectual resources is provided here. It provides the collection of beliefs and theoretical underpinning of firstly, the phenomena in question and secondly, the methodology of the research process.

1.4.1 Intellectual Climate

The word paradigm, according to Guba (1990), is used in multiple forms in social scientific literature. In this research it refers to the assumptions regarding how the world should be studied (Lewis & Kelemen, (2002). The empirical research is presented from the paradigm of the interpretive social sciences (see section 4.1). The literature review and research design are strongly influenced by this paradigm.

1.4.2 Market of Intellectual Resources

The applicable meta-theoretical statements and theoretical models for this study are provided here. The conceptual descriptions of boundary, boundary management, integration, differentiation and consulting are furnished.

(a) Meta-theoretical Statements

The description of the metatheories relating to this study provides insight into the disciplines of organisation development and consulting psychology. The fundamental beliefs of these disciplines contribute significantly to the intellectual climate in which the researcher operates.

Organisation Development represents the metatheoretical departure point for this study. It is concerned with the performance, development and effectiveness of human organisations (Beckhard, 2006). See section 2.1.

Consulting Psychology is the discipline applied to investigate organisation development (see section 2.1). Lowman (2002) frames consulting psychology as an independent discipline that focuses on the improvement of organisations on the individual, group and entire organisational level. In this thesis a specific consulting process and approach is described. It will contribute to the current and growing body of literature in the field.

(b) Theoretical Model

Systems psychodynamic theory provides the theoretical foundation for this study. The conceptual origins of this theory, namely psychoanalysis, the systems approach and the field of group relations (Fraher, 2004) and key theoretical concepts are discussed in section 2.2.

(c) Conceptual Descriptions

In this section key concepts that are of theoretical importance to this study are mentioned. They are: boundaries, boundary management, integration, differentiation, consulting and boundary management consulting. Each of these is defined and discussed in Chapter 3.

Boundaries

Boundaries define what is inside and outside of any system or any part of a system (Churchman, 1997). Boundaries as organizational phenomena are fully defined and described in section 3.1.

Boundary Management

Boundary management constitutes the central concept of this study. It is defined as the integration and differentiation of the organisation along the lines of identity, role, task, authority and capability. (See section 3.2.)

Integration

Integration, in this thesis, refers to the process by which a shared psychological belief is created, among the members of a group or organisation, that they are related and connected. Integration is discussed in section 3.2.1.

Differentiation

In this study differentiation is defined as the social and psychological process by which individuals, groups and organisations draw distinctions between themselves and others. Differentiation is considered in 3.2.1.

Consulting

Consulting is defined as: A helping relationship between a consultant and a client system aimed at closing the gap between the perceived state of affairs and the desired state of affairs (see section 2.1)

Boundary Management Consulting

This is consulting aimed at helping the organisation to integrate and differentiate effectively by providing a psycho-educational process that ultimately increases the capacity of the organisation to perform its primary task (see section 3.3).

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this section details of the research design are provided. This includes an overview of the research approach, the research strategy and the research methodology. A full description of the research design is to be found in Chapter 4.

1.5.1 Research Approach

The scientific belief system underlying this study is that of the interpretive social sciences (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999), also called the hermeneutical stance (Scott & Keetes, 2001). A qualitative research design was chosen. Thereafter a mix of descriptive research and discourse analysis was followed.

1.5.2 Research Strategy

The empirical study is qualitative in nature, as mentioned. The research strategy is aimed at the exploration and creation of theory regarding boundary management and boundary management consulting.

A case study design is employed to achieve the empirical objectives. Two cases are made use of to examine the systems psychodynamics of organisational boundary management and boundary management consulting. The data is utilised to construct theory in the form of hypotheses.

The cases are referred to as, Case A: Leadership in Business Support Services and Case B: Information Security in an International Specialist Banking Group. Both these cases provide examples of consulting focussed on organisational boundary management.

1.5.3 Research Method

An overview of the research method is furnished in this section. A full description of the setting, entrée and the establishing of research roles, sampling, data collection methods, recording of data, data analyses, strategies employed to ensure quality of data and the reporting style may be found in Chapter 4.

Research Setting

The research presented in this thesis was conducted in the South African head office of an international specialist banking group.

Entrée and Establishing Researcher Roles

The author (and student) took up three distinct roles in this research. The first role is the role of *the consultant*. The primary task of the consultant is to consult to the client system. In order to study his own consulting process the author also took up the role of *participant observer* (Brewerton & Millward, 2001). In this role the author witnessed the consulting process, described, it, recorded it and tried to make sense of it, while at the same time being part of it (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002)

The third role was that of *discourse researcher*. In this role the author conducted a systems psychodynamic discourse analysis of the data provided by the participant observer. The analysis was used to interpret the data at a deeper level. This final analysis is contained in Chapter 6.

Sampling

Two case studies were used in this research (N=2). The sampling method was theory based purposive sampling, also known as theoretical sampling.

Data Collection Methodology

Data collection occurred during the course of the consulting process. Participant observation was employed for this purpose. Brewerton and Millward (2001) describe such observation as an unstructured process, entered into by the researcher without any preconceived ideas, codes or foci. Ethnographic interviews provided a further source of data in this research and formed part of the consulting process. Interviews of this kind can be described as “a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants” (Flick, 2009).

The focus group method was used in Case A as part of the consulting process. Focus groups are groups of people who are specifically recruited to discuss a particular topic

of interest (Bernard, 2006). In Case A, work teams were interviewed about their experiences within their particular working context.

Recording of Data

The diary method (Brewerton & Millard, 2003) was utilised to record data. The researcher collected data during each step of the consulting process, working with field notes after interactions with the client system as well as recording information during interactions with clients.

Data Analysis

Systems psychodynamic discourse analysis was used to analyse the data (Smit & Cilliers, 2006). Analysis in discourse research, although greatly varied, goes through four stages as described by Potter (2003, p. 83-87):

- (a) “Generating Hypotheses”: The discourse researcher formulates hypotheses or questions during the initial research process.
- (b) “Coding and Building of a Collection”: The coding process is a form of data reduction where phenomena are merged or separated as the researcher begins to make sense of the subject under study.
- (c) “Doing the Analysis”: Hypotheses are tested and checked at this point. Patterns of behaviour may be of importance during this process.

(d) “Validating the Analysis”: Validation and analysis are linked in this type of research. The accumulation of findings from different studies (known as coherence), among other approaches, is used to increase validity.

Strategies Employed to Ensure Quality Data

The author and consultant in this study used himself as the instrument of analysis (McCormick & White, 2000; Haslebo & Nielsen, 2000). In other words, he applied his knowledge of systems psycho dynamics and used his own subjective experience to make sense of the client system and to interpret his experience (see section 2.2).

The validity and reliability of this case study research design was ensured through the application of the techniques prescribed by Riege (2003):

Construct validity was ensured through the use of multiple sources of evidence; establishing a chain of events; and the review of a draft case study report. *Internal Validity* of findings was assured by crosschecking of data in the data analysis phase. *Reliability* was ensured through providing a full account of theories and ideas for each research phase, assuring congruence between research issues and the features of the study, the concrete recordings of actions and observations, and peer reviews.

Reporting

In Chapter 5 the first level of research findings is discussed. These findings represent an initial level of psychodynamic interpretation (see Chapter 2) of what occurred in

the two cases. This first level of analysis (Potter, 2003) was conducted from the participant observer's perspective (see section 4.3.2.).

In Chapter 6 the author supplies a second level of analysis of the same cases that were presented in Chapter 5. The analysis that was discussed in Chapter 5 is now unravelled and categorised through the use of collections (4.3.6). In Chapter 5 the thoughts and interpretations of the consultant were presented through the eyes of the participant observer. In Chapter 6 a further analysis by the *discourse researcher* (see section 4.3.2) is added.

1.6 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The chapters are outlined as follows:

Chapter 2: The Systems Psychodynamic Consulting Framework

This chapter presents systems psychodynamics as a consulting paradigm. The focus falls on content (theories about the consulting paradigm) and process (theories about the consulting steps, events and activities).

Chapter 3: Boundary Management

The purpose of this chapter is to describe boundary management and boundary management consulting within an organisational context. The researcher defines organisational boundaries from a systems psychodynamic perspective and describes

the dynamic nature of boundary management. Principles for boundary management consulting are defined.

Chapter 4: Research Design

The purpose of this chapter is to furnish a detailed account of the research approach, the research strategy and the research methodology. This includes a description of the organisation and industry where the research was done and details about each of the case studies included in the research.

Chapter 5: Research Findings Level One

The aim of this chapter is to supply the first level of research findings. Here the case studies are presented in descriptive format from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

Chapter 6: Research Findings Level Two

This chapter provides a second level of research findings. Here, research findings are presented as themes and working hypotheses. Two primary research hypotheses are formulated using the first level findings in Chapter 5.

Chapter 7: Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

The aim of this chapter is to consider the research findings in relation to the problem statement in Chapter 1. In this last chapter the researcher contemplates what the results mean in relation to the research problem, identifies limitations of the study and makes some suggestions in terms of these limitations and future research on the topic.

1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided background and motivation for the research presented here. The problem statement and research objective were discussed. The research model, paradigm and design were also considered. The chapter concluded with an outline of all the chapters to follow, offering a brief description of each.

CHAPTER 2

THE SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC CONSULTING FRAMEWORK

In this Chapter organisational consulting is described. The consulting framework used in this research is also explained. The field of systems psychodynamics provides the consulting perspective (and content) to the framework while process consultation provides the structure (and process) of the framework. Each one of these aspects is described here.

2.1 ORGANISATIONAL CONSULTING

Solving problems is an integral part of organisational life. Consultants are often considered when one or more people in an organisation experience a discrepancy between the perceived state of affairs and the desired one (Haslebo & Nielsen, 2000). This conceptualisation of the place of consultation places it firmly in the realm of organisation development.

The field of organisation development, as the metatheoretical departure point for this study, is concerned with the performance, development and effectiveness of human organisations (Beckhard, 2006). Within this broad definition one finds different paradigms, each with its own approaches, techniques and methodologies. Senge (1990) made organisation development synonymous with building the learning organisation. His five disciplines are aimed at the continuous growth and development of the human organisation in relation to its environment. The learning capacity of

organisations as well as the struggles and pain they endure, as they learn, is a focal point of the consulting approach described in this thesis (see 1.5.2).

Organisation consulting psychology is a discipline falling under the broader umbrella of organisation development. As indicated, Lowman (2002) defines consulting psychology as an independent discipline that focuses on the improvement of organisations, on the individual, group and entire organisational level. The focus here is not just on the application of psychology in business, government and non profit institutions but also on the process and approach of consultation. Lowman's conceptualisation of organisational consulting psychology implies the application of psychology, a particular approach and a process. Each of these aspects is important for this thesis. In section 2.2 the systems psychodynamic consulting framework is presented as the approach towards consultation that is studied here. In section 2.3 the consulting process is defined. All of this information contributed to the particular consulting framework used in the consultations that were studied in this research. Before this information is presented, though, one should take a step back and ask: What exactly is consulting?

The words "organizational consulting" produced 7 210 000 hits on the Google search engine at the time this research was conducted. Among these websites are many consultancies advertising their services on the World Wide Web. The evidence suggests that organisational consulting has become "big business". These consulting firms provide a professional service to their clients, but what do they do? Many of these websites refer to "helping" in their description of services. Schein (2009) also connects consulting with helping and describes it as a fundamental human

relationship that moves things forward. Schein (1999) focuses on helping as a social process and therefore on the concept that a relationship is formed between one or more people. The helping relationship is one that moves the client from dependency (on the consultant) toward self esteem (Clark & Fincham, 2002) or interdependence (Bion, 1961). Czander, Jacobsberg, Mersky and Nunberg (2002) support the view that successful consultation is about relationship aspects, and specifically about moving out of the position of an idealised (see anxiety and organisational defenses under section 2.2) object towards what they refer to as “a real relationship”. What Schein (1988, 1999) refers to as *process consultation* places a greater focus on managing the interpersonal process between client and consultant than on content expertise. Lambrechts, Grieten, Bouwen and Corthouts (2009) acknowledge the pioneering contribution of Edgar Schein and reaffirm the approach as being more relevant than ever. (This process is explained in section 2.3.)

Consulting, for the purpose of this research is defined as: A helping relationship between a consultant and a client system, aimed at closing the gap between the perceived state of affairs and the desired one (Clark & Fincham, 2002; Haslebo & Nielson, 2000; Schein, 2009).

A helping relationship is defined as: A relationship that moves the client system from a place of dependency on, or idealisation of, the consultant towards a place of esteem, equality or interdependence (Bion, 1961; Clark & Fincham, 2002; Czander et al, 2002; Schein, 2009).

A *client system* may refer to an individual, group or entire organisation (Lowman 2002). In this research reference will be made to organisations or organisational sub-systems. The latter may be any sub-component of an organisation (Baush, 2001).

2.2 THE SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC CONSULTING PERSPECTIVE

In this section the systems psychodynamic consulting perspective is discussed with specific reference to the role, tasks and knowledge of the consultant when working from this standpoint. Miller (2004, p.17) points out that theory does not stand still and that “the character of today’s work organisations calls for modifications in the original systems psychodynamic framework”. The author presents here the origins of the perspective, its original concepts and important developments of some of these concepts as they are now constructed and applicable to this research.

The systems psychodynamic view of organisations looks beyond the rational and economic view of work. It focuses on the organisation as a living system which is both conscious and unconscious (Colman & Geller 1985). Fraher (2004) traces the roots of the approach to classical psychoanalysis, group relations theory and open systems theory.

Freud’s psychoanalytic theory posits the ego, the id and the superego as the structure of personality (Freud, 1961). In his theory the id represents the irrational and emotional part of the mind. The superego comprises the moral aspect of the mind and is the representation of parental and societal values in the mind. The ego is the rational part of the mind. It realises the need to compromise, negate and constantly negotiate between the id, the superego and external reality; this is also known as the

reality principle (Moller, 1993). Freud's theory of personality formed the basis of classical psychoanalysis.

The psychoanalytical roots of the systems psychodynamic perspective can be traced to the object relations theory of Melanie Klein and the group relations work of Wilfred Bion (Colman & Geller, 1985; Hirschhorn & Barnett, 1993; Klein, 1959). Object relations theory is a sub school of classical psychoanalysis: it focuses primarily on interpersonal relationships and more specifically on the primary attachment of infants to their mothers (Klein, 1959). The term *object relations* refers to an individual's attitude, behaviour and emotion towards objects in the environment. The ego exists in relation to other objects (people or inanimate things) and human relationships are seen as the primary motivational force in life (Klein, 1959). Bion was influenced by the work of Klein, and recognised the primitive unconscious realities of groups and how they were connected to early childhood experiences (Bion,1961).

Group Relations Theory developed fundamentally from the work of the Tavistock clinic (Brunner, Nutkevitch & Sher, 2006; Gould, Stapeley & Stein, 2004) that was founded in September 1920 (Fraher, 2004) and the work of Bion (1961) as regards group psychotherapy and group dynamics. Group relations theory brought psychoanalytical understanding to the internal environments of groups, the function of leadership, and the interactions of groups with each other in organisations (Rice, 1965). The body of knowledge created by group relations theory was further enhanced by the addition of the sociotechnical perspective (Miller & Rice, 1967). This perspective places psychological dynamics within social, political and technical

realities such as organisational structures and roles. Fundamental to the said perspective is the open systems perspective.

The Open Systems Perspective can be traced back to a long list of nineteenth century writers (Fraher, 2004), although Bertalanffy is often mentioned as a key contributor of the theory when it comes to its application in systems psychodynamics (Miller, 1985). The open systems approach has at its core the idea that systems are made up of many sub-systems that are all in some way related and interrelated (Bausch, 2001; Churchman, 1968).

The systems psychodynamic perspective, applied as a consulting stance, can be defined as a psycho-educational process aimed at creating organisational awareness of unconscious dynamics (Cilliers & Smit, 2006; Neumann, Kellner & Dawson-Shephard, 1997). From this perspective the consultant provides opportunity for organisational learning, which occurs on a psychological, conscious, unconscious and dynamic level. Levine (2002) advances a strong argument for learning through experience that is supported by thinking. This type of organisational consultancy provides exactly this kind of learning. The organisation learns through its own experience by thinking about and understanding its own experiences. The consultant helps with undergoing this thinking process. Learning, however, is an individual psychological process and not an organisational process (Haslebo & Nielsen, 2000). Given this, the idea of organisational learning is defined here as the enhanced capacity to carry out the primary task of the organisation (Bain, 1998).

The primary task of the systems psychodynamic consulting stance is defined as: Activities aimed at creating organisational awareness and learning through a psycho-educational process that ultimately increase the capacity of the organisation to perform its primary task. The systems psychodynamic consultancy stance focuses on educating and empowering the client rather than providing answers and solving problems. This model moves away from the idea that the consultant has all the answers. This psycho educational element creates a “learn as you go” attitude, with the consultant and the client working together.

In the systems psychodynamic stance the consultants are part of the systems to which they consult. Consultants affect the problems they observe and in turn are affected by these problems (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). It is within this context that the consultant, employing the systems psychodynamic consulting stance, uses the self as an instrument of organisational diagnosis (McCormick & White, 2000). This would imply that the consultant understands the client system, as he experiences it emotionally and perceptually, as part of the system (Heslebo & Nielsen, 2000). A model of *the instrumental self* is proposed by Seashore, Shawver, Thompson and Mattare (2004). In their model they specifically mention making choices and working with the unconscious. Hypotheses about these aspects of the consulting stance are advanced in Chapter 6.

In this research the client system, as experienced by the consultant, is interpreted from a systems psychodynamic perspective. This perspective would typically include the following concepts and models:

Unconscious aspects of organisations and organisational life. “Our unconscious plays a tremendous role in determining our actions, thoughts, fantasies, hopes and fears” (Kets De Vries, Korotov & Florent-Treacy, 2007, p.3). The systems psychodynamic perspective is concerned with organisational life beneath the surface (Stapley, 2006), in other words, beyond what is known or conscious. This includes an understanding of how people use organisations unconsciously for the resolution of suppressed needs, personal renewal, enhancing self esteem, acting out aggressive impulses or as places where they play or act out on imagination (Adams & Diamond, 1999). The systems psychodynamic perspective brings into the consulting realm the non-rational and emotional realities of organisational life and accords to these realities as much focus and attention as to the conscious aspects of the organisation (Huffington, Armstrong, Hoyele & Poole, 2004). Organisations are in essence interpersonal spaces, so that complex emotions and feelings such as love, hate, envy and gratitude, shame and guilt, contempt and pride, jealousy, doubt, uncertainty and resentment are part of the entity (Hirschhorn, 1997; Huffington et al, 2004; Menzies 1993; Stein, 2000). Stapley (2006) explain how people may adopt behaviour in organisations that works directly against the primary task of the organisation (see “primary task” under this section). He points out that this anti-task behaviour refers to what feels emotionally appropriate to them in that given situation. One may deduce that in the case of such behaviour, the unconscious emotional needs of the organisation become greater than its conscious task needs. The systems psychodynamic perspective situates unconscious organisational dynamics in relation to the conscious organisation. As Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert (2008, p.11) point out, “...a psychodynamic view of organizations looks at all possible factors –

conscious and unconscious – that influence group and organizational behaviour and structures”.

The basic assumption groups of Wilfred Bion. Bion (1961) originally identified three primitive modes of group functioning: dependence – a form of group regression where the group seeks a leader or becomes dependent on a leader for all its needs concerning protection and guidance; fight-flight – the group unites to escape or confront a shared threat or enemy; and pairing – the group becomes pre-occupied with the pairing of two members whom they believe could magically produce ‘the answer’ or ‘the one’ that may save them all (Huffington et al, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Stapley, 2006). Two other basic assumptions, namely one-ness (Lawrence, 2000; Turquet, 1975) and me-ness (Lawrence, 2000; Lawrence, Bain, & Gould, 1996), were later added. The concept of one-ness refers to the activity where a group seeks to join in a powerful union (the individual becomes less important) and that of me-ness to the stance where group members deny the existence of the group and focus on their own individuality. The work of Bion created a gateway into the study of the unconscious of groups. Miller (1998) takes a critical look at this fundamental theory and reinforces Bion’s discovery of the group as an intelligible field of study. He also points out that this view of *the group* has implications for the definition of classical psychoanalytical concepts such as splitting, projections and transference (Cilliers, Rothman & Struwig, 2004). He believes that these concepts should not be described according to the dyadic theories of psychoanalysis but should be framed within the context of groups and organisations, perceived as entities with distinctive dynamics of their own (see “Anxiety and Organizational Defenses” in this section).

A systemic view of the organisation. The systems psychodynamic perspective is concerned with collective behaviour. Groups may be viewed as individuals in relationship to one another (Klein, 1959). This would include the relationship between individuals and the group, the relationships and interrelationships between groups and the relationship and interrelationships between groups and organisations as a whole (Cilliers & Smit, 2006; Fugua & Newman, 2002). This aspect of the systems psychodynamic perspective corresponds to the fundamental concept in general systems theory that systems are made up of sub-systems and that these sub-systems are related and interrelated (Bausch, 2001). Bion (1970) formulated the concept of container-contained to illustrate the reciprocity and interrelations between two functions (Huffington et al, 2004). It is not possible to understand a system without understanding the interactions between its parts (Compernelle, 2007). This is the concept that a system is more than the sum of its parts. The consultant operating within a systems psychodynamic perspective views individuals in relationship with other individuals, and in relationship with the teams they belong to, and, at the same time, as part of the teams they work in. The same principle would apply to teams. Teams conduct relationships with each other and the organisation; they are at the same time part of the organisation and the divisions they work in. Oliver (2005) takes the systemic point of view into practical consulting. She focuses on patterns of connection as patterns of feeling, meaning and action. In her model the consultant pays attention to and analyses organisational culture stories (stories about the way things can and should be done), relational stories (stories about who we are, can be, and should be in relationship), identity stories (stories of who we are, can and should be) and episodes of communication (sequences of communication such as meetings) to uncover patterns of connection. Organisations as a collection of connected and

interconnected sub-systems constitute a primary focus of the consulting stance adopted in this research.

Organisational boundaries. The systemic aspects of the said paradigm accord obvious importance to the concept of boundaries, because these define what is inside or outside of any system or any part of it (Churchman, 1997). These parts may refer to individuals, groups, and divisions of an organisation, entire organisations or even nations. Boundaries could be objective (physical) or subjective (psychological) and there are connections between objective and subjective ones (Hirschhorn, 1995; Lawrence 1979). Organisational literature on spatial/temporal boundaries frequently overlooks the psychological meaning and functions of boundaries (Diamond, Allcorn & Stein, 2004).

The function of boundaries, at least from a psychodynamic perspective, is to contain anxiety and to make the world seem controllable, safe and contained (Stapley, 2006). In this study boundaries are viewed, fundamentally, as psychological phenomena (subjective boundaries) but in relation to physical phenomena (objective boundaries). Given this perspective, they are also viewed in both conscious and unconscious ways. As psychological phenomena they are also regarded as dynamic. In other words, boundaries exist in relation to people and people exist in relation to each other. This view of boundaries (as psychological, systemic and dynamic phenomena) is fundamental to the perspectives in this research.

Stapley (2006) identifies three types of artificially created boundaries: spatial, temporal and psychological boundaries. Spatial boundaries are formed around

territory and are external, while temporal boundaries are related to time and psychological boundaries are internal. Boundaries can thus be viewed as concrete constructs that differentiate self and others but also as constructs in the mind that may be created and shared collectively (Diamond et al, 2004; Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1992). Psychological boundaries define who belongs to the group: they are the criteria used by groups to establish who are members and who are not (Stapley, 1995). In new order organisations or boundary-less ones, the traditional organisational maps (structure, time and so on) no longer supply the boundaries that hold it all together (Hirschhorn, 1992). The boundaries in these organisations are blurred and ambiguous; hence the containment that was provided by means of structure and bureaucracy in the past is now reliant on leadership and the ability of the organisation to manage its boundaries (de Gooijer, 2009). The concept of boundaries is fully defined and further discussed in Chapter 3.

Theory of leadership. This would include elements such as the role of the leader, the leader as object, the relationship between leaders and followers, the psychological life of leaders, their fantasies and their ways of interacting with their environments (Hirschhorn, 1997; Kets de Vries, 1991; 2003; 2006). The expectation of the leader as a saviour or hero is of importance to this study. Hirschhorn and Young (1991) describe the image of the hero as a mythical figure which we appreciate, admire, envy and hate. They explain that people use the hero to deny their anxiety in organisations. When leaders are regarded as saviours or heroes they will need to deal with a host of complex unconscious emotions, not the least being the unconscious expectation of staff that the leader should provide “all the answers”. Idealisation is at the core of the hero concept: it is the process of overvaluing an object (person, group or organisation)

by unrealistically exaggerating the good aspects of the object (Blackman, 2004; Huffington, Armstrong, Halton, Hoyle & Polley, 2004). (See anxiety and organisational defenses in the section to follow.) Idealisation is also applicable to the consulting relationship (as explained earlier in 2.1), and is closely related to dependency (the basic assumption (Bion 1961) described earlier).

The concepts of holding and containing in relation to the tasks of leaders are also important in this study. Vansina and Vansina-Cobbeaert (2008) describe these as two different but overlapping constructs. They consider *holding* as something one does for someone (creating an environment in which people feel safe and can perform), whereas *containing* is a purely psychological process (assistance with containment of the unpleasant, destructive, dangerous and anxiety provoking characteristics of people). The function of leaders in organisations is to create a holding environment and to provide containment. Good holding environments contribute to the containment of difficult emotions. These concepts apply not only to leadership but are used in many different contexts. Both the cases in this research touch on holding and containment.

Anxiety and organisational defences. Anxiety and the containment of anxiety in organisations are central topics in the systems psychodynamic perspective. Cooper and Dartington (2004) explain how the new flat structured networked organisations leave people naked. They discuss how role, task and authority in the bounded organisation contained anxiety by means of structure and consider how people in the networked organisation need relationships and interrelationships to perform the same containing task. Anxiety and defences are inextricably linked in the systems

psychodynamic tradition. Hyde and Thomas (2002) suggest that anxiety leads to organisational defences that in fact do not solve anything. Social defences against anxiety develop unconsciously when the anxiety of people is uncontained (Collman & Geller, 1985; Stapley, 2006). Socially constructed defence mechanisms serve to protect individuals from anxiety and difficult feelings such as guilt, doubt and uncertainty (Menzies, 1993). Rationalisation (making excuses to reduce tension), denial (disavowal of reality in spite of overwhelming evidence of its existence), sublimation (engaging in an activity that symbolically represents a fantasy), regression (reversion to a less mature level of behaviour), identification (replacement of one's actual desires by existent external desires), displacement (substitution of one desire by another or of one object of satisfaction by another), scapegoating (a form of displacement leading to blaming or punishing the object of the displaced content), splitting (certain people are regarded as purely hostile and others as purely loving), projection (one attributes one's own issues to another person) and introjection (one forms an image of another person) are all forms of defence mechanisms (Blackman, 2004; Stapley, 2006, p.44-71).

Splitting, projections and scapegoating are important defence mechanisms for the purpose of this research. The work of Melanie Klein (1959) described the process of splitting and projection in infants. Splitting is a process of dividing impulses (conflicting emotions) and objects (the good and bad aspects of people). She also referred to this dynamic as the paranoid schizoid position (Gould et al, 2004; Huffington et al, 2004; Klein, 1959). Projection is the process of attributing to another person some of one's own qualities (Blackman, 2004; Halton, 1994; Klein, 1959; Rice, 1965). The process of splitting good and bad and projecting bad aspects onto

another person or group may also lead to the persecution of that person or group, which is termed scapegoating (Gibbard, Hartman & Mann, 1974). Furthermore, when people or groups who receive projections are emotionally affected by the projections or unconsciously identify with the projected feelings — known as projective identification (Haslebo & Nielsen, 2000) — working out what belongs to who could be a difficult task. The evolution of this body of theory has established the paradigm of the social system as a defence against anxiety. This view places the classical defence mechanisms within a group and organisational context where the group as an entity represents dynamics and defences of its own (Miller, 1998). Stein (2000) challenges some of the conventional wisdom of the Kleinian school of psychoanalysis and describes the notion of the social system as an envious attack as opposed to a defence against anxiety. This paradigm is of an entirely different order and describes modes of functioning that are intrinsically attacking and intrinsically defensive. This development of the theory is also applicable to this study.

The defence of identification with the aggressor is also of specific importance to this research. In this defence one may act abusively to another person or group because the latter had acted abusively towards one (Blackman, 2004). Identification with the aggressor means that the aggressor is introjected into the mind (Stapley, 2006).

Menzies (1993) describes a variety of practices in general hospitals that serve as social defences against the anxiety created by the work itself. Treating patients as a number rather than a person assists hospital staff not to become personally involved in the pain and suffering of patients, for instance. Socially constructed defences are ways of organising work, people and processes in order to alleviate work related tensions.

Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert, (2008) point out that these defences usually start out as conscious reactions to disagreeable experiences at work, which become institutional practices over time. These defences are therefore very different from individual defence mechanisms. Bain (1998) hypothesised that organisations with a similar primary task are likely to put up similar social defences. He called these *system domain defences*. They are shared across the boundaries of similar institutions and are not unique to particular institutions.

The organisation in the mind. The organisation as a living human system of interactions and interrelations is in many aspects a psychological space. Stapley (1996, p. 50) concludes that: “organisations are what their members make of them. They exist only in the perceived reality of the members of the organisation. It is very much a matter of an idea held in the mind of the members, of people held together by psychological cement”. The consultant works with the relationship between the system as a reality and the system in the mind (Cilliers & Smit, 2006). The organisation in the mind, according to Armstrong (2000, p.7): “...does not only refer to the client’s conscious or unconscious mental constructs of the organisation: the assumptions he or she makes about aim, task, authority, power, accountability and so on. It refers also to the emotional resonances registered and present in the mind of the client”. This broad definition of *organisation in the mind* will be made use of in this research.

Authority. Dealing with authority is a significant aspect of the systems psychodynamic perspective; this may include concepts such as dependence, envy, abdication and heroism (Hirschhorn, 1997). The relationship between the overt and

covert organisational realities in terms of the systems psychodynamic paradigm becomes very apparent when authority is examined. Authority that is overtly delegated to roles in organisations is called organisational authority, while personal authority refers to the permission that people give themselves to take up a role (Gould, 1993). Obholzer and Roberts (1994) refer to authority from above (authority derived from one's role in the system), authority from below (sanctioned by the working membership of the organisation), and authority from within (a sanctioning of one's self in a role). Taking up personal authority is an internal psychological process. Hirschhorn (1997) believes that postmodern organisations rely much more on the personal authority of people than organisational authority. He does, however, stress the importance of negotiating authority in postmodern organisations. This is the concept that different parts of the organisation need to agree with each other about who is authorised to do what on behalf of whom. Clegg, Courpasson and Phillips (2006, p.103) describe authority as "legitimate rule". They point out that authority is based on meaningful social relations and is therefore agreed and not imposed. A discussion of *authority as boundary* continues in Chapter 3.

Organisational roles. Role is a social psychological concept (Klein & Pritchard, 2006). In other words it exists in the minds of those who are occupying the roles and also of those who relate to and with the roles. The consultant operating in the light of a systems psychodynamic paradigm, as in the case with authority, will work with both overt and covert roles. Overt roles are part of the conscious organisation; these are negotiated and given labels, while covert roles are emotional themes based on unexpressed latent content (Gemmill & Kraus, 1988). A person working in a bank may for instance fulfil the overt role of *investment banker*. This label carries with it a

set of tasks and responsibilities that is known and expected in relation to the activities of the overt organisation. The same person might also be *the shoulder to cry on* in the team. This is a covert role that may demand a great deal of time and energy from the individual. Roles can either be adopted by facing the real work they represent or violated by escaping the risks that are inherent in the role (Hirschhorn, 1995). Czander (1993) points to the complexity of assuming a role. He makes specific mention of the social meanings of roles and observes that roles are accorded labels and associated status. Entry into a role has at its core a process of identification (Czander, 1993). In the process of carrying out a role the person would need to identify with the meaning that the label of the role conveys. In this study the roles of individuals and groups are considered. The discussion of *role as boundary* is continued in Chapter 3.

Primary Task. The concept of primary task refers to the work that an organisation needs to do to survive in its environment (Klein & Pritchard, 2006; Rice, 1963; Turquet, 1985). This connection between the primary task and organisational survival provides a powerful insight into the core driving force of the organisation. The primary task is a tool of exploration that can be applied by the consultant to examine the organisation and all its sub-systems, roles, relationships and activities from the perspective of purpose (Lawrence, 1985). Lawrence here refers to the way that the primary task as a concept in the minds of people provides, to the consultant, a door into many organisational realities. In other words, an exploration of the primary task of the organisation as understood by different people can help to explain the way they behave and approach their work. Obholzer (2007) points out how tasks that are difficult, stressful and emotionally painful may be unconsciously avoided by people

as a defence (Menzies, 1993); this refers to the concept of anti-task behaviour and socially constructed defences that was also mentioned earlier. Kets de Vries, Korotov and Florent-Treacy (2007) comment that all human behaviour, even very deviant behaviour, can be explained rationally. Working with the *primary task* can help consultants to recognise anti-task behaviour and subsequently the unconscious drivers of behaviour in the system under study.

The consultant applies the systems psychodynamic paradigm through **the use of hypotheses**. Haslebo and Nielson (2000, p.124) distinguish between general hypotheses: “an image or a metaphor created on the basis of information and observation about the participants’ behaviour, intentions, expressed thoughts, and internal relations”; and working hypotheses: “the consultant’s own tool, which may provide a preliminary model for summarising and clarifying what is going on in the system”. The working hypothesis methodology is fluid and open ended. The consultant continuously adds to these hypotheses as new information become available in a *work as you go* fashion. As a tool, working hypotheses provide structure to the consultant. They encourage consultants to be diligent, to look beyond the obvious, to explore, to question their own thinking and to stay open and flexible. The use of working hypotheses is common in systems psychodynamic consultations.

2.3 THE CONSULTING PROCESS

The consultant offers the opportunity for organisational learning through the application of the consulting process. The latter provides structure and containment to the consulting interactions and focuses primarily on the relationship with the client system. In this section the different steps or events during the consulting engagement are defined. Each of these steps is related to the systems psychodynamic paradigm.

Schein (1988, 1999) presented process consultation as a consulting approach characterised by collaboration with the client. The approach focuses more on process than content and is defined as follows: “a set of activities on the part of the consultant that help the client to perceive, understand, and act upon the process events that occur in the client’s environment in order to improve the situation as defined by the client” (Schein, 1988, p.11). There are six steps or stages of process consultation according to Schein (1988, pp.117 – 189):

The initial contact with the client organisation. During this stage the client contacts the consultant and an exploratory meeting takes place. Its aim is to determine more precisely what the problem is, to assess whether further involvement is likely to be of any help to the organisation, to assess whether the problem will be of interest to the consultant and to formulate the next action steps with the client. At this point the consultant is already using the self as an instrument and begins to form working hypotheses (Haslebo & Nielsen, 2000). In this research this phase is referred to as *engaging*.

Defining the relationship and consulting contract. The formal contract provides boundaries for the relationship and includes the formal decision as to how much time will be devoted to the consultation, what general services will be performed, and the form and amount of payment. The informal psychological contract involves the client's implicit and sometimes explicit expectations of what will be gained from the relationship, what obligations he might have to the relationship, and the consultant's implicit and sometimes explicit expectations of what will be gained from the relationship and of resulting obligations. The contracting phase is also an aspect of container building. In this phase the roles of client and consultant are negotiated and agreed. During this phase the consultant is already working with the covert aspects of his own role in relation to the client, the authorisation of the consulting role and the boundaries of the consulting assignment. This aspect of the consulting process is referred to as *contracting* in this research.

Selecting a setting and method of work. This stage involves selecting a setting in which to work, the specification of the time schedule, a description of the method of work to be used, and a preliminary statement about the goals to be achieved. This includes a definition of the primary task of the consulting assignment and a systemic analysis of the organisation and the task at hand. Haslebo and Nielsen (2000) include learning about the organisation under this phase. These aspects of the consulting process appear under *contracting* in this research.

Diagnostic interventions and data gathering. This stage will include all forms of data gathering including direct observation, individual and group interviews, questionnaires or some other survey instrument. Data analysis is performed according

to the systems psychodynamic paradigm as described above. It is important to distinguish here between the consulting style and the consulting paradigm. The consulting style is open and direct, as suggested within the process consulting approach. This means that consultants do not play the role of psychologist, asking obscure questions and adding secret interpretations to the data. The systems psychodynamic paradigm offers a model of understanding to the consultant. The interpretations are offered to clients in language that they understand and the spirit of collaboration is maintained. In this stage hypotheses are formed and tested in collaboration with the client. In this study the term *analysing* is used to refer to these aspects of the consulting process.

Confrontive interventions. These interventions are broadly categorised by Schein (1988) as agenda managing interventions (this includes all interventions that focus on process rather than content) including feedback, coaching, counselling and structural suggestions. In this thesis the term *intervening* is used.

Reducing involvement and termination. In this phase the client and consultant agree on the reduced involvement of the consultant. The door of the consultant stays open, though, and further work, or a low level of activity, is always an option. In this study the term *disengaging* is used.

Lambrechts et al (2009) built on Schein's concept of process consultation and modified it into what they term *relational practices*. The primary difference is a shift away from a classical helping relationship (see section 2.1) towards engaging in joint activity. More emphasis is also placed on doing things together than reflecting and

diagnosing. These nuances are employed by the consultant in this research and are also incorporated in the proposed consulting approach as regards boundary management.

The slight differences in terminology also reflect this shift from helping towards joint activity. The terms contracting, analysing, and intervening are made use of in this research not as steps in a linear process but, rather, to refer to aspects of the consulting process. The terms engaging and disengaging refer to the beginning and the end of the consultations.

2.4 THE CONSULTING TASKS

The tasks of the consultant are considered here. These are viewed by the author as central in taking up the role of consultant. They consist of questioning, creating hypotheses, making decisions and taking action, which are discussed below.

According to Dillon (2003) consulting is a profession of questioning. He regards questioning as the basis of consulting. In this study questioning is perceived as one of the fundamental tasks of the consulting role. The consultant in the two cases did not use any model of questioning. The questions that were posed during the consultations are, however, described and interpreted in Chapters 5 and 6. The role of creating hypotheses (Haslebo & Nielson 2000) as part of the consultation was explained in section 2.2. Hypotheses for each of the cases are presented in Chapter 5. The data is used to further discuss this task in Chapter 6. Making decisions and taking action are two separate but interrelated tasks. These activities fit into the relational practices

framework of Lambrechts et al (2009) as described in section 2.3. These activities are also discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 in relation to the case study data.

2.5 THE CONSULTING FRAMEWORK IN THIS RESEARCH

The aim of this section is to define and describe the consulting framework that is used in this research. The framework is based on the theory in sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 and consists of the consultant's role and primary task, the consulting process and the consulting methodology.

The primary task of the consultant is to create organisational awareness and learning by means of providing a psycho-educational process (Cilliers & Smit, 2006) that ultimately increases the capacity of the organisation to perform its primary task (Rice, 1963).

The role of the consultant is to help the client system to achieve its stated objectives, solve problems and develop itself through the application of a consulting process (Clark & Fincham, 2002; Czander et al, 2002; Schein, 2009) (see section 2.1). The consultant performs this role by means of the following: questioning, creating hypotheses, making decisions and taking actions (Dillon, 2003; Haslebo & Nielson, 2000; Lambrechts et al, 2009) (see section 2.4).

The consulting methodology stems from the systems psychodynamic stance (see section 2.2). This includes the application of systems psychodynamic theory, the

development of working hypotheses and using one's self as an instrument of analysis (McCormick & White, 2000).

The consulting process consists of engaging, contracting, analysing, intervening, and disengaging (Schein, 1988) (see section 2.3):

Engaging begins the moment that the consultant meets the client (Haslebo & Nielsen, 2000). This is not always as simple as it may seem. In the two cases presented in this research the consultant was already engaged in the client system. Engagement in this research comprises the phase of the consultation made use of to understand the primary task of the consultation.

Contracting in the two cases presented in this research takes place several times during the consultation. The consulting relationship alters as the consultation progresses, and so does the contracting. The essence of contracting does not change, however (Schein, 1988).

Analysing in the two cases refers to any activity related to interpreting information. Schafer (2003) describes *insight* and *interpretation* as the essential tools of psychoanalysis. These tools also apply to systems psychodynamic consultation. Schafer points out that interpretation needs to happen within context. In this research the consultant uses himself as instrument (McCormick & White, 2000) and applies the systems psychodynamic perspective (as explained in section 2.2.) within the context of the client system. In the cases investigated here a specific focus is placed on boundary management consulting. The assumptions of the consultant about

boundary management are mentioned in 3.3. These assumptions and perspectives constitute the basis of the interpretations that are arrived at in this research.

Intervening in the two cases refers to any action of the consultant which aims at working on the primary task of the consultation. This may include actions aimed at gathering information.

Disengaging in this research refers to the phase where a contracted primary task has been fulfilled and where the consultation ends or where a new primary task begins.

Contracting, analysing and intervening are not linear steps and may be repeated several times in a single consultation; they may even follow a different order (Schein, 1988).

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this Chapter, organisational consulting was defined, while systems psychodynamics was explained and defined as a consulting paradigm. Process consultation was described. The consulting framework that is applied in this research was presented.

CHAPTER 3

BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT

In this chapter organisational boundaries, boundary management, and boundary management consulting are described from a systems psychodynamic perspective. The primary building blocks of the said boundaries are explored and the dynamic nature of each of these constructs is considered in terms of boundary management, which is also presented as an organisational and a consulting task.

3.1 THE SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON BOUNDARIES

Boundaries define what is inside and outside of any system or any part of a system (Churchman, 1997). *The system or any part of a system* here may refer to individuals, groups, divisions of an organisation, or whole organisations. This broad definition of boundaries represents the departure point of this discussion.

Boundaries help us to make sense of the world: they provide a means of classification and categorizing without which the here and now would be chaotic and intolerable (Stapely, 1996; 2006). Boundaries, regarded in this way, provide people with a sense of safety and control. Without boundaries it would be hard to make sense of our world.

(Hirschhorn, 1995; Lawrence 1979). Hernes (2004) proposes a framework for the interpretation of boundaries that captures their multi-dimensional reality. In this framework, distinctions are made between mental boundaries (core ideas and

concepts central to a group or organisation), social boundaries (identity and social bonding tying the organisation together) and physical boundaries (formal rules and physical structure regulating human action and interaction).

Hyde (2006) points out that boundaries, as a concept, can be elusive and that a metaphor may be helpful in understanding these phenomena. One of the metaphors that she offers is the *region metaphor*. According to it, boundaries are locations for identity development and integration. These locations are also demarcated by different tasks. This conceptualisation builds on the definition of Churchman (1997) and brings into play concepts such as task and identity when boundaries are concerned. This is not an entirely new idea. Hirschhorn and Gilmore (1992) presented identity, task, authority and political boundaries as the new boundaries of *the boundary-less organisation*. They believe these psychological boundaries have become more significant than the old organisational structure since organisations have altered from vertical hierarchies into horizontal networks. Hayden and Molenkamp (2002) propose the acronym BART (boundaries, authority, role and task). They regard these constructs as key learning areas in the Tavistock tradition and also explain their related and interrelated aspects. Cilliers and Koortzen (2005) devise the CIBART model in which six constructs, namely: conflict, identity, boundaries, authority, role and task are used as a systems psychodynamic framework to understand and consult as regards team conflict. Cilliers and Koortzen suggest that the constructs are used in relation to each other in order to make sense of team dynamics. They also consider identity, role and task as boundaries in their own right. In their model Santos and Eisenhardt (2005) define boundaries of efficiency, of power, of competence and of identity. These models gave rise to the idea that the constructs of identity, role, task,

authority and capability could be applied to understand organisational boundaries in a dynamic way. The inclusion here of capability as a construct is supported by the work of Dosi, Faillo and Marengo (2009). Each of the chosen constructs is explained in the following sections.

3.1.1 Identity as a Boundary

In order to understand identity in boundary management terms, it is useful to consult the work of Margaret Mahler. In her *separation individuation theory* she describes the normal symbiotic phase in infant development where the child is aware of the mother but has no sense of individuality, the infant perceives the mother as an aspect of itself, and differentiation only takes place over time (Apprey & Stein, 1993; Mahler, 1972; Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975; Shapiro and Carr, 1991). The process of differentiation is also the process of establishing individuality.

The concept of individuality is discussed in the personality theories of all schools of psychology (Moller, 1993), the earliest conceptualisation being the *ego* as coined by Freud (1923). Freud's original terminology was *Das Ich* which directly translated into English would mean *I, my self*. Erickson (1997) used the term *Ego Identity* and described identity formation in terms of a developmental process occurring over the lifetime of a person. The concept of *Identity* is prominent in sociology and social psychology. It places the concept of self and ego in a social context. Olson (2008) defines Personal Identity as a set of problems or questions which may include questions like: *Who am I? What am I and What could I have been? The question Who*

am I? is equated by Stapley (2006) to a mental line or a boundary, which is defined by the idea that I am *this, and not that* or *me and not me*.

The concept of identity provides a foundation for the understanding of individual, group and organisational boundaries (Roberts & Dutton, 2009). Identity captures the essence of what could be called the primary boundary condition: The concept of *me and not me*. This concept can very easily be extrapolated to groups and organisations as *us and not us* (Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1992; Stapley, 2006). The conceptual realities of *me and not me* or *us and not us* are underpinned by the theory of separation individuation. This idea would imply that an individual or group is differentiated from another on the basis of who they are. There are complex boundary realities between individuals and organisations on the level of identity. Kreiner, Hollensbe and Sheep (2006) point out that the questions: *Who am I? and Who are we?* are often addressed by researchers as separate issues. The interrelatedness of individual and organisation or individual and team is important. This concept of *separate but interrelated* helps one to see how identity boundaries are often entangled. Ybema, Keenoy, Beverungen, Ellis, and Sabelis (2009, p.302) describe identity as a “lynchpin in the social construction of self and society”. They suggest that identity studies should pay attention to both self-definitions and definitions of others as regards identity. This “neither here nor there” quality of identities seems to make them elusive constructs. The question *who am I?* might in fact not be so simple to answer. Clarke, Brown and Hailey (2009) observe that work identities are derived from organisationally based discursive resources. These resources, it seems, are often ambivalent, even antagonistic, making work with respect to identity an unending process of sifting through what counts and what does not. Understanding who one is

and how one relates to others seems to be a prerequisite for being a healthy individual. Kets de Vries (2006, p.246) describes “the healthy individual” as someone with a “stable sense of identity” among other things. The social context and the boundary management aspects of identity are clearly illustrated by the idea of *inlines* and *outlines* (Miller, 1985). Miller describes the inline as the way A sees him or her self and the outline as the way B sees A. In this model a person may be able to control how they view themselves but cannot fully control how others view them. The inline or way another person views one needs to be negotiated (Miller 1985). The concept of inlines and outlines is taken further in section 3.3.

Viewed in this context, identity differentiation is a boundary management task. Organisations, groups and individuals constantly need to define and differentiate their own identities in relation to others within a social, work and organisational context. Hatch and Schultz (2009) advance a strong argument for the interrelatedness of identity, culture and image. They argue that identity expresses cultural understanding and that expressed identity leaves impressions on others. In this thesis the concept of identity as collective phenomena is very closely related to the idea of organisational culture. The manner in which identities, when expressed culturally, influence others is also important for this study. The focus here is specifically placed on identity as an integrating mechanism. According to Gundlach, Zivnuska and Stoner (2006, p.1614), “team identity” is essential for team performance. They believe “the extent of team identification among team members will positively affect team identity”. This concept situates collective team identity not only as a differentiator but also as an integrating mechanism (Roberts & Dutton, 2009). Integration and differentiation are discussed in section 3.2.1.

3.1.2 Role as a Boundary

Identity and role are closely related constructs. Kets de Vries (1991) explains how a person's job or work role can displace all other interests and become fully the identity of the person. Stapley (1996) on the other hand points out that roles are labels that may or may not be congruent with who the person really is. According to him, roles are separate from individuals; they provide us with conceptual information about past, present and future actions. Roles as labels can also be viewed as objects in the object relations sense (Klein, 1959). This would mean that roles carry with them, and can evoke in people, unconscious expectations, emotions and fantasies. The person may identify fully with the role and define him or herself only in relation to the role, or may find a dissonance between him or herself and the role, depending on what the role means in the context of the organisation and in relation to who the person really is.

In this study the overlap or interrelation between aspects of identity and role is important. If identity and role are related and interrelated, and if identity is the primary differentiator between two people, groups or organisations, one can also assume that role is a differentiator. This would imply that a person or group is differentiated from another on the basis of the role they play in the organisation.

In Chapter 2 the relationship between the organisation as a reality and the organisation in the mind was discussed and a distinction was made between covert and overt roles. This idea is applied to roles by Cilliers and Koortzen (2005): they

distinguish between normative roles (objective role descriptions), existential roles (this is the conceptualisation of the role in the mind of a team) and phenomenal roles (these are the unconscious aspects of roles that can only be inferred by others). They point out that incongruence between these different roles may lead to conflict in teams.

Shumate and Fulk (2004) take a communication-based approach to roles and role conflict. They explain that roles are communicated and negotiated and that role conflict arise when an individual experiences multiple and conflicting role expectations by others. Parker (2007) describes roles as socially constructed rather than purely objective. She also observes that people have different beliefs regarding what their role is about, even when they are performing the same role. This social and relational perception of roles is congruent with the views in this study.

In this research roles are perceived as boundaries. They exist in the minds of people and may be informed by unconscious, historical content and fantasies. Identity and roles are related, and even interrelated, concepts but are not the same. Boundary management in terms of role can include the alignment of identity and role, the negotiation and agreement of roles in a social context as well as the management of the relationship between normative roles and unconscious individual and organisational role expectations and fantasies. The primary boundary management question in relation to role is: *Who is called what and what does it mean?*

3.1.3 Task as a Boundary

In Chapter 2 the concept of primary task was identified as the task that an organisation must accomplish successfully beyond others in order to survive. Elfer (2007) described three different types of primary tasks: normative, existential and phenomenal. Normative primary tasks relate to the official tasks of the organisation, often declared in a mission statement. Existential primary tasks are those that staff believe matter. Phenomenal primary tasks are visible in behaviour but they are altogether unconscious. These different primary tasks can be in direct conflict with each other. For this reason they may also be seen as demarcations of sorts. Molleman (2009) refers to task autonomy and task interdependence to describe the level of freedom that employees enjoy to make decisions about the arrangement of work and the degree of dependence of employees on each other to carry out work. These ideas provide us with some distinct characteristics of tasks as boundaries. Task boundaries differentiate individuals, teams and organisations in terms of what they do. For Hirschhorn and Gilmore (1992, p.107) the critical question in terms of task boundaries is “Who does what?” They also explain that task fulfils an integrating function as it brings different people together around a shared goal. Gundlach et al (2006, p.1613) support this concept by their hypothesis that “higher levels of task interdependence will result in higher levels of team identification”.

If role provides us with a label that indicates possible action, task provides the content and purpose to a role. Boundary management as regards a task has to do with creating shared meaning around it and negotiating this meaning with the rest of the organisation.

3.1.4 Authority as a Boundary

Authority or authorisation might not seem to be an obvious boundary, but upon closer examination the relationship becomes apparent. The recent replication of Stanley Milgram's (1963, 1965, 1974) obedience studies by Burger (2009) provides evidence of the important relationship between boundaries and authority. In the experiment participants obey the request of the researcher to administer electric shocks to another participant as part of a supposed study into associated learning. A large number of participants were willing to administer potentially deadly shocks. In Burger's (2009) version 65% of participants were willing to administer a shock to the end of the generator's range. The research demonstrates the significance of authority and authorisation in people's willingness or capability to overstep certain socially constructed or moral and ethical boundaries (Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips, 2006).

In Chapter 2 the difference between organisational and personal authority was pointed out. The negotiation of authority was also mentioned as an important aspect of organisational life. Hirschhorn and Gilmore (1992, p.107) pose the question: "Who is in charge of what?" in order to uncover the authority boundary. They explain that in the more flexible organisations of today, it is not obvious who leads and who follows within a particular context; knowledge of a particular problem or issue seems to play a far greater role than formal authority.

Clegg et al (2006, pp.320-340) view authority within the context of power and the political organisation. The ability of people to negotiate authority, according to their

theory, is not entirely equal. They argue that organisations have different political forms and that people acquire negotiating power through a range of variables that may differ from one organisation to another. *Organisations as political systems* and *power* do not fall within the scope of this study. However, it is important to note that the research organisation in this study (like any other organisation) consists of identifiable political realities that lead to the inequitable distribution of power. These variables are named in section 4.3.1 and explained in Chapter 5. For the purposes of this study authority is viewed as a boundary. The construct *power* is only of interest here where it influences the ability of individuals and groups to negotiate authority.

Authority as a boundary differentiates individuals, groups and organisations in terms of what they are authorised to do. The authority can be accorded formally, taken personally or negotiated interpersonally. On a boundary management level people need to align authority with their roles and tasks. They also need to negotiate the authority they need to perform their work.

3.1.5 Capability as a Boundary

The construct *capability* does not appear to be of interest to systems psychodynamic researchers. Reference to capability nevertheless does appear in managerial literature and in research on knowledge management. According to Dosi et al (2009,p.1166) “organizational capability is a large scale unit of expression used to describe the ability of the organisation to produce an outcome”. Their discussion of capability contains several points of interest for this study. They point toward the systemic properties of capabilities and how they are located in an individual, but also between

individuals in groups and in entire organisations. Most importantly they depict capabilities as boundaries and refer to “distinctions of capability across segments of activity”. According to this view organisational divisions and sub-divisions are organised in terms of their capabilities to produce certain outcomes. The term *capability* as a broad term refers to skills, knowledge, knowhow, work routines or anything else that might contribute to organisational outcomes. The relation and interrelatedness of capabilities and roles can best be understood when one considers how roles are taken up in organisations. The process of successfully carrying out a role in an organisational context relies on the fit between the person and the role (Czander, 1993). The capabilities of a person and the role that the person takes up in the organisation would need to be congruent. In their study of *role breadth self efficacy* Axtell and Parker (2003) link roles, tasks and skills. They also point out that the enlargement of jobs should be accompanied by increased autonomy and capability. These ideas are important for this study because they suggest the relationship and interrelationships between role, task and capability.

Capability in this research is defined as the ability to produce a desired organisational outcome through the application of individual, group or organisational competencies and organisational resources. Capabilities exist on an individual, group or organisational level and a wide range of factors may enhance or diminish capability. Individual and collective competencies are often viewed as closely related to capability. Santos and Eisenhardt (2005) refer to *boundaries of competence*, defined as bundles of resources that provide a competitive advantage to the organisation. A full description of all the factors contributing to capability falls outside the scope of this research. Nevertheless it is hypothesised that the construct

capability is related to and interrelated with the constructs: identity, role, task and authority.

3.2 BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT AS AN ORGANISATIONAL TASK

In this section, boundary management is examined as a task of the organisation. Singer, Astrachan, Gould and Klein (1979) consider boundary management to be the major leadership function in any organisation. They make a distinction between managing external boundaries (the relationship of the organisation with the outside world) and managing internal ones (the relationship of the task of the organisation with its internal structures). Schein (2004) extends this idea and links it with organisational culture. He defines external adaptation and internal integration as mechanisms that create organisational culture. According to Schein (2004), members of organisations continuously create shared meaning about how the organisation should respond to the outside world (external adaptation) and how different sub-systems of the organisation should be connected to each other internally (internal integration). According to this model, shared meaning is created between people through the discourse between organisational members. Managing the shared meaning system of the organisation is the primary task of leadership, according to Schein (2004). When there is a high level of shared meaning about the primary task of the organisation, about how it will go about to deliver on this task and the way the organisation will differentiate and integrate internally, the culture is strong. When there are many pockets of difference and misalignment about these issues the culture becomes less robust. The concepts of Schein (2004) and Gould and Klein (1979), viewed in relation to each other, bring boundary management into the realm of

organisational culture. Given these perspectives, boundary management concerns managing what is inside and what is outside, through integration internally and adaptation externally.

One may add that boundary management is about conversations aimed at creating shared meaning (Hatch & Shultz, 2002; Hernes; 2004; Schein, 2004). The conversations that result from active boundary management in organisations enhance shared meaning and therefore strengthen organisational culture. Good boundary management, in other words, encompasses good communication. When organisations begin to actively manage their boundaries, individuals, teams, and departments start to negotiate their boundaries with each other (Hirschhorn & Gilmore,1992). They include each other in discussions about how to structure themselves around work and they create agreement and alignment. These conversations are not always easy to hold. Boundaries can restrict people and are also political (Hirschhorn, 1992). Boundary discussions involve different groups with different interests; they are about what one can and cannot do (see 3.1.5); and concern authority and power (3.1.4). Boundary discussions are, for this reason, also political discussions. When organisations are very hierarchical these discussions become difficult (Hirschhorn 1997). When people are told what their boundaries are, and they cannot negotiate their boundaries for themselves, the flexibility of the organisation begins to suffer. Effective boundary management can only take place in organisations where people are afforded a reasonable level of freedom to negotiate their own boundaries.

Boundary management occurs on all organisational levels (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). It is not only present between people, teams, departments and entire

organisations, but also exists between the organisation and its customers, the organisation and its shareholders and any other stakeholders that one may wish to mention. At the same time boundary management happens inside of people. They constantly need to manage the boundaries between the different roles they play: leader and team member; work life and home life; individual and group member; and so on. Boundary management is the way we make sense of the world, without it we will be lost (Stapley, 2006).

Boundary management is in essence an organisational task. This means it is not something that a leader or a consultant can do on behalf of the organisation. It is carried out by the entire organisation and it is an ongoing process (Fuqua & Newman, 2002). This simply means that every individual, group and division in an organisation is constantly busy managing their own boundaries in relation to each other (Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1992). This takes place consciously or unconsciously, whether a consultant intervenes or not, and is an inevitability of organisational life. Boundary management seems to be a natural and continuous organisational reality.

This brings one to the place of consultants in boundary management. Given the idea that boundary management is a natural and continuous organisational task, one may ask whether consulting to the process is really needed. The belief in this study is that boundary management can be more effective or less, effective and that consultation may be in support of good boundary management. The essence of boundaries is that they are places and spaces in the mind (Stapley, 2006). Hence they need to be negotiated and agreed. The very fact that boundaries may be viewed as psychological and social constructions (Hernes, 2004) makes boundary management a complex task.

This view of boundary management shifts it from the concrete to the abstract, from the conscious into the unconscious and from the tangible into the intangible. When boundary management occurs as an unconscious activity, many dynamics that are not related to the performance of the primary task of the organisation may interfere with or sideline the process. The effects of good boundary management are easy to identify. Organisations who manage their boundaries effectively exhibit good relationships and effective communication and collaboration between different people, teams, departments and divisions (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Organisations that manage their boundaries poorly are, on the other hand, slow to change or fragmented. They suffer from constant conflict, communication problems and collaboration issues that hamper the ability of the organisation to perform its primary task (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967).

Schneider (1991, pp.184 - 185) provides a set of key boundary issues and principles that clearly define the arena of boundary management in an organisational context:

- (a) Boundaries are necessary and need to be established and negotiated in order to ensure appropriate levels of differentiation and integration
- (b) Boundaries cannot be managed without autonomy; establishing and negotiating boundaries both requires and provides autonomy and control
- (c) Strong boundaries incur the risk of reduced integration, while strong pressure for integration threatens boundaries
- (d) A crucial dilemma faced by organisations is how to maximize a sense of identity and autonomy in individuals and groups, yet maintaining the necessary interdependence and integration as well as efficiency.

3.2.1 Integration and Differentiation

Schneider's (1991) principles raise the issue of integration and differentiation. In this section integration and differentiation are discussed as interrelated and complementary organisational tasks. As Lewes and Kelemen (2002, p. 251) observe, organisations face “contradictory demands for control and autonomy, coordination and individuality, expansion and contraction”. Theory of organisational integration and differentiation seems to explain how organisations deal with these paradoxical demands.

“Integration is the process of achieving unity of effort among the various sub-systems in the accomplishment of the organisation's tasks” (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967, p. 4). In this definition the concept of *process* is important. Integration does not occur in a single moment but takes place over time, through human interaction. This may refer to the process of a single person joining an existing team, a group of individuals forming a new team or a whole organisation being integrated into another organisation as part of a merger or acquisition. The second part of the definition that is also of importance to this study is the thought that integration happens in relation to the “tasks” of the organisation as a primary driving force of the process. These early concepts of integration are taken into the psychological realm in this research. Gundlach et al (2006), in their study of performance, individualism and collectivism, conclude that for teams to be effective, each member needs to believe that every other member identifies with it. These ideas relate to the concept of social boundaries that Hernes (2004) advances in his boundary framework. He explains that social

boundaries are the extent to which members feel that they are bonded together. Consequently, *integration, in this research, refers to the process by which a shared psychological belief is created, among the members of a group or organisation, that they are related and connected.* Bartunrk, Huang and Walsch (2008, p. 21) refer to a shared group process, characterised by group sense making about organisational events and emotional contagion among group members, facilitated by social comparison and group cohesion. They describe social comparison as a process whereby one group compares itself to the members of another group, exaggerates the differences and strengthens the in group similarity. According to these authors, the members of a cohesive group are “attracted to the group”, “share a bond to it” and “value belonging to the group”. For the purposes of this research a broad concept of integration will be used rather than a narrow one. The work of Bartunrk at al (2008) is viewed only as offering examples of integration rather than providing a definition of it. Integration is a most important notion, however.

Integration seems to be an important aspect of organisational performance. Schein (2004) equates it with the strength of an organisation’s culture, while there also seem to be more direct benefits such as higher levels of coordination between organisational members and teams. Ambrosini, Bowman and Burton-Taylor (2007) in their article on inter-team and intra-team coordination activities relate coordination to higher levels of organisational service delivery. In this research the term *integration issues* refers to problems related to the organisation’s ability to integrate. These would typically manifest themselves as boundary issues where individuals and groups in an organisation become disconnected from each other.

“Differentiation is defined as the state of segmentation of the organisational system into subsystems, each that tends to develop particular attributes in relation to the requirements posed by its relevant external environment” (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967, pp. 3-4). The notion of *particular attributes* is of importance to this study. The researcher discusses certain attributes or constructs that are used by organisational sub-systems to differentiate themselves. It should also be noted that the definition given by Lawrence and Lorsch does not necessarily refer to physical (objective) attributes; these could also be psychological (subjective) attributes. Hernes (2004, p. 15) describe boundaries as “distinctions... or markers of identity serving to convey distinct physical, social, or mental features by which the organisation differentiates itself from the environment”. *In this study differentiation is defined as the social and psychological process by which individuals, groups and organisations draw distinctions between themselves and others.* These distinctions may be physical or psychological in their make up. This differentiating function of boundaries represents a focal point of this study. Identity, role, task, authority and ability have already been mentioned here as constructs that differentiate organisations and organisational sub-systems from each other. In this research *differentiation issues* refer to problems related to the organisation’s ability to differentiate. These would typically be manifested as boundary issues where individuals and groups in an organisation are not distinct from each other.

Organisations that are highly differentiated and well integrated at the same time perform better than those who are not (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). The management of these two antagonistic states seems to be an essential organisational task both for the performance and the survival of the organisation. Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert

(2008) bring these concepts together in their discussion on collaboration. They explain that parties usually meet to collaborate because they are different and therefore provide different resources, perspectives, skills or competencies to each other. Collaboration is at the heart of the integration / differentiation dynamic. Various organisational sub-systems need to differentiate clearly in order to collaborate with others (Hyde, 2006). Balance here is important. Too much differentiation can lead to the complete separation of different organisational sub-systems, making it hard for those areas to collaborate. Gundlach et al (2006, p. 1611) touched on this reality with their research on individualism-collectivism and performance. The focus of their research was on the individual and group level but the principles seem applicable to all sub-systems in organisations. These authors hypothesised that “higher levels of individualism will result in lower levels of team identification”. When the members of a team do not identify with it one cannot expect the team to be integrated. One may restate this hypothesis as: Too much differentiation will lead to an inability to integrate. Too much integration, on the other hand, may lead to a lack of distinction between different organisational parts. When organisational sub-systems become unable to distinguish themselves from others, collaboration becomes impossible. The balance between integration and differentiation can also be related to the ability of the organisation to be flexible and adaptable. Schein (2004) equates organisational survival with the ability of organisations to adapt externally and integrate internally. The flexibility and adaptability of organisations are directly related to their ability to survive. A healthy balance between integration and differentiation lies at the heart of this characteristic.

For the purposes of this study boundary management is defined as the integration and differentiation of the organisation along the lines of identity, role, task, authority and ability. Consulting seems to find a place within this context. During this research it became apparent that the consultant contributes to the process of boundary management by helping the organisation to become aware of its own boundary management issues. The consultant also assists the organisation to work with integration and differentiation. This is done by supporting the communications and negotiations that need to take place in order to manage boundaries. This support may be directly related to the communication that must occur but it can also be offered through the psycho educational process that helps the organisation to become aware about where it needs to focus.

3.3 BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT AS A CONSULTING TASK

In Chapter 2 the consulting framework of this research was described from a systems psychodynamic and process consulting perspective. In the next section the primary task of boundary management consulting is defined within the parameters of those perspectives. An integrated reconstruction of theory dealing with boundaries and boundary management is also provided. These assumptions are fundamental to this research and serve as technical integration of the academic arguments thus far.

Schneider (1991) defines the primary task of intervention at the organisational level as aiding the organisation to differentiate and to integrate at the same time. Using this concept, the primary task of boundary management consulting can be defined as follows:

To help the organisation to integrate and differentiate effectively through providing a psycho-educational process that ultimately increases the capacity of the organisation to perform its primary task .

Boundary management consulting within this research is based primarily on the following assumptions:

Boundary management happens between people and in the minds of people.

Boundary management is therefore a social and psychological process.

In the organisational context, as mentioned, group and individual boundaries are related and interrelated. In this research the interplay and the tension between the individual and the group, the group and the organisation as well as between the organisation and its environment provides the context for boundary management. Boundaries are regarded as concepts existing in the minds of people. These conceptualisations may be individual or shared. The psychological and social view of boundaries means that boundary management concerns learning and negotiating. Organisational sub-systems (these include individuals) need to learn what their boundaries are and negotiate these with other parts of the organisation. The processes of learning and negotiating occur at the same time.

There are five key differentiating constructs that define boundaries in the minds of people and in organisations: identity, role, task, authority, and capability.

As indicated, these constructs are dealt with in this study as primarily psychological constructs. In other words, they exist in the minds of people. The idea of “organisation in the mind” is extrapolated to “boundaries in the mind”; the constructs of capability, identity, authority, role and task are used as the building blocks of these boundaries. “Authority in the mind” for instance may refer to the construction of a person’s own authority as it is understood or perceived by that person. This construction is an individual psychological construction about the person’s relationships and relatedness to and with others. This “construction in the mind” carries inherent boundaries with it. It is argued that the constructs identity, authority, capability, role and task are used by individuals, groups and organizations to answer the question “who am I” and “not I”, “Us” and “Not us”.

Each of the boundary constructs contains conscious and unconscious aspects.

If the proposed boundary constructs are essentially psychological constructs then they will also possess psychological properties. The theory is that these constructs are both conscious and unconscious constructions in the mind of people. The boundary between leaders and reports may be defined in conscious terms using the proposed constructs: A team leader might have a title, job description, role description, formal responsibilities and distinct abilities that would clearly differentiate him from subordinates. On an unconscious level the same relationship might also have, under the surface, a father-son construction. The unconscious emotional needs of a subordinate might define different role and task realities for the team leader and vice versa.

There are two aspects to each boundary namely, inlines and outlines.

The inline consists of the identity, role, task, authority and ability that A (an individual, group or organisation) perceives itself to have, whereas the outline consists of how B (another individual, group or organisation) perceives the identity, role, task, authority and ability of A. This principle calls the social aspect of boundary management into play. Viewed in this way, a boundary may be shared or not shared, recognised or not recognised. This also points to the fact that a boundary may exist for one person but not for another. This aspect of the theory provides an understanding of boundary confusion and conflicts.

An individual, group or organisation can only exercise control over its inline; the outline needs to be negotiated.

This principle means that if a boundary exists for a particular person, team or organisation it will not automatically be recognised, accepted, authorised or supported by others. Sometimes boundaries need to be explained, negotiated, agreed or even enforced before they are authorised or recognised by others.

For individuals in the same team or organisation to share an inline, negotiation will need to take place between those individuals.

A shared concept of the boundary of a team requires a meeting of minds between the people in the team. In this study a shared set of assumptions about identity, role, task,

authority and ability is viewed as an inline (a shared concept of the team's own boundary).

Physical and psychological boundaries are related and interrelated.

This is the belief that psychological boundaries result in physical boundaries or barriers and vice versa. A group of people who identify with each other will, more often than not, visibly identify themselves as a group in some way or another. This could include language, dress, sitting together. These physical artifacts are results of their psychological boundaries. On the other hand, if a physical boundary is created between or around people they will, more often than not, respond to it psychologically.

These seven basic assumptions position boundaries as multidimensional and dynamic. Multidimensional, because they are viewed as physical and psychological; individual and collective (shared); conscious and unconscious. The dynamic aspects of boundaries lie in the fact that they are related and interrelated. This applies to each of the boundary dimensions mentioned here. An individual's moral boundaries on a personal level are related to and interrelated with the moral boundaries of society. The conscious aspects of those moral boundaries will also be related to and interrelated with unconscious beliefs and assumptions. These psychological conceptualisations will, in turn, lead to physical or artifactual (Schein, 2004) behaviour. These boundaries also consist of central concepts or differentiators. For this study identity, role, task, authority and capability are perceived as the primary differentiators of boundaries and also as boundaries in their own right. They are also multidimensional.

This means that each of the differentiators possesses conscious, unconscious, physical, psychological, individual and collective attributes. The principles and differentiators provide a set of descriptors that helps to define and categorise boundaries. A boundary can now be described as an individual, unconscious, authority boundary or a collective, conscious, role boundary.

Each of the differentiators can be related to primary boundary management questions and boundary management tasks as explained in section 3.1. This is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Boundary Management Tasks and Primary Questions

Differentiator	Primary Question	Boundary Management Tasks
Identity	Who am I and who are we?	Creating a shared idea of who you are and negotiating it with others.
Role	Who is called what and what does it mean?	Aligning role expectations with identity, task, authority and ability and negotiating role expectations with others.
Task	Who does what?	Creating a shared sense of task and negotiating it with others.
Authority	Who is in charge of what?	Aligning authority with identity, role, task and ability and negotiating authorisation with others.
Capability	Who can do what?	Aligning capability with identity, role, task and authority.

The basic assumptions, boundary dimensions, boundary tasks, boundary questions and differentiators presented here offer a framework for boundary management consulting. This framework is an extension of the broader psychodynamic perspective described in section 2.2.

In summary: Boundary management consulting as defined here consists of using the self as instrument (McCormick & White, 2000), understanding the patterns of connectedness of the organisation and its sub systems (Oliver, 2005), and forming and testing hypotheses (Haslebo & Nielson, 2000) as a psycho-educational process (Cilliers & Smit, 2006) within the broader systems psychodynamic perspective (section 2.2 & 3.3). All of this forms part of a consulting process (section 2.5).

3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter “boundary management” was defined in the light of a systems psychodynamic perspective. Boundary management was also described as a task of the organisation, and was further defined as a task of the consultant in the form of boundary management consulting.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, details of the research design are furnished. These include a description of the approach, the strategy and the methodology envisaged. A full description of the research setting, entrée and the establishing of research roles, sampling, data collection methods, recording of data, data analyses, strategies employed to ensure quality of data and the reporting style is provided in this chapter. The two case studies are also introduced.

4.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

The scientific belief system underlying this study is that of the interpretive social sciences (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999), also called the hermeneutical stance (Scott & Keetes, 2001). The ontological perspective of the *interpretive social sciences* focuses on reality as people perceive it. The interpretive philosophers disagreed with the analogy drawn by the positivists between the physical, or so called, natural world and the social world (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Reality in the interpretive paradigm is not out there and it is not objective. External human behaviour is only an obscure indication of true social meaning. Social reality, in other words, is based on people's definitions of it. This reality can alter over time and is not the same for everyone. The reality of the interpretive social scientist, according to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), is internal and subjective.

The epistemology of interpretative social sciences regards knowledge as true when it makes sense to those being studied and contributes to understanding their meaning system (Scott & Keets, 2001; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). For the interpretive scientist the social world is different from the natural world: it is a realm of meaning and includes social practices, institutions, beliefs and values (Gorton, 2006).

It has been pointed out that “Interpretive methods and methodologies contend with methodological positivism and with quantitative methods that enact positivistic philosophical presupposition” (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006, p. 12). Interpretive approaches rely greatly on qualitative methods of research. These scientists spend hours in direct contact with those being studied and gather large quantities of data on a few subjects (Brewerton & Millward, 2001).

These underlying beliefs exercised a strong influence on the research approach used in this study. A qualitative research design was more appropriate than a quantitative one, given the focus on the subjective meaning of people. Discourse analysis seemed to be the appropriate tradition of qualitative research to follow. Potter (2003) describes the core features of discourse and the principles of discourse analysis:

- (a) Discourse is action oriented: Discourse analysis places the focus “on human action and interaction”. These phenomena are not viewed as “free-standing” but as part of broader practices or specific contexts.

- (b) Discourse is situated sequentially, institutionally and rhetorically: Discourse analysis takes into account the sequence of events, institutional realities such as roles and opinions and also broader and even underlying possibilities.
- (c) Discourse is constructed and constructive: Discourse is constructed in the sense that it is created from different resources such as words, commonplace ideas and broader explanatory systems. It is constructive in the sense that “people’s phenomenological words are built and stabilised in talk in the course of actions. Discourse analysis is interested in people’s accounts of events as versions of the truth imbedded in their own reality as part of a broader context” (Potter, 2003, p. 76).

The researcher typically asks *how* questions when using discourse analysis. Potter (2003) explains that the focus of discourse analysis is not placed on one-to-one relationships between phenomena (e.g. what is the influence of X on Y?); rather, discourse work typically focuses on questions of form (e.g. How is X done?). He explains further that in the tradition of discourse analysis questions are often asked about the way psychological terms and notions are used and about practices in work and institutional settings as well as the work practices of psychologists themselves.

In this research organisational boundaries as psychological phenomena as well as boundary management consulting within a work and institutional context are studied. The questions: How do organisations manage their own boundaries? And how does the organisation consulting psychologist consult to organisational boundary management? are central to this study.

4.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY

The empirical study is of qualitative nature. The research strategy is aimed at the exploration and building of theory about boundary management and boundary management consulting. Camic, Rhodes and Yardley (2003) make the point that qualitative research is specifically useful for theory building and the exploration of new topics. A qualitative design was chosen because it provides a less linear approach to research than some quantitative designs. The need for research designs that take into account the complex, systemic, chaotic and dynamic aspects of the social world was explained in Chapter 1. The researcher is of the opinion that a qualitative research design has a greater chance of adhering to these requirements than a quantitative one. The research findings in this thesis are descriptive in nature. Dulock (1993, p. 154) combines five classical definitions of descriptive research to present a broad and simple definition of the approach: “Accurate and systemic description of *something* or *someone*” [italics added]. In her discussion it is apparent that *something* could refer to any phenomena and *someone* could also refer to groups and organisations. In this research, boundary management and boundary management consulting are described as phenomena. The organisational consultant and the organisation are described within this context. Kozlowski (2009), in his editorial explanation of the mission, scope and standards of quality of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, points towards the journal’s interest in descriptive research on applied psychological phenomena. He continues to define his view of good descriptive research: “A replicable methodology... directed at providing data on important and unknown phenomena,

particularly answering those questions for which theory alone cannot (or is very unlikely to) yield solutions” (Kozlowski, 2009, p. 2). In this study boundary management and boundary management consulting is described with the aim to understand more fully the application of systems psychodynamic theory within this context.

A case study design is used to achieve the empirical objectives. Brewerton and Millward (2001, p. 53) define case study research as “the description of an ongoing event (e.g. organisational change) in relation to a particular outcome of interest (e.g. strategies of coping) over a fixed time in the here and now”. Case study research is often associated with theory building as opposed to theory testing (Woodside & Wilson, 2003). A case study design was chosen for this very reason. The aim in this research is to construct theory rather than to test it.

Two cases are made use of to examine the systems psychodynamics of organisational boundary management and boundary management consulting. The data is utilised to construct theory in the form of hypotheses. The cases are referred to as: Case A: Leadership in Business Support Services and Case B: Information Security in an International Specialist Banking Group. Both these cases furnish examples of consulting focussed on organisational boundary management. The two cases presented the consultant with two very different levels of consultation. Case A took place on a micro level, focusing on the intergroup dynamics of specific teams in a single division and geography. Case B occurred on a macro scale (group-as-a-whole, Wells, 1980) including all the divisions of the organisation, different geographies and several support functions on a group wide level.

4.2.1 Case A: Leadership in Business Support Services

This case study was conducted in the operations area of the Investment Banking division, one of the five specialist business units of an international specialist banking group (described in 4.3.1). The primary task of this business unit is to produce income by means of the growth and preservation of people's assets. It is structured in terms of two major areas. A front office, client facing area and a back office, operational support area. These are separated to the extent where they are physically located in different areas in the head office building. This structure provides the opportunity to each area to focus their undivided attention on their primary tasks. The primary task of the front office is to offer clients relevant advice and portfolio management services, focusing on capital protection and growth in both local and international investments. The primary task of the back office is to enable the front office through IT and administrative support and solutions. Business Support Services (BSS), the focus of this case study, was formally known as Financial Management Services (FMS): a back office function that provided full support to the securities division. It also provided services to third parties in an attempt to generate its own income. This strategy proved to interfere with the level of service to the internal clients and the decision was made to split it into two separate entities, with a focus only on internal clients. *Settlements* became an area on its own while the operational support area became a separate entity called *BSS (Business Support Services)*. BSS comprised several teams who were mostly IT related. These included: the business analysts, service desk and statements, development, infrastructure and EISS (an incentive

scheme team). Each of these teams had their own team leader who reported to a person who will be referred to as Michael, the head of BSS. Michael in turn reported to the head of the securities division through the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Securities who was responsible for all back office areas.

This reporting structure very clearly created intergroup dynamics between the front and the back office. The back office was structured to follow the strategy of the front office. The COO handled all back office issues while the head of the securities division handled all matters related to the front office. This way of working provided greater focus and priority to the front, with the COO effectively reporting to the head of the division. This structural difference in authority is an important element of this case.

The different teams in BSS each performed autonomous tasks but there were numerous interactions between the teams that needed to be coordinated by the team leaders. This necessity for collaboration led to a weekly team leader meeting where operational issues were discussed. The team leaders at this point did not view themselves as a team but rather as an operational forum.

4.2.2 Case B: Information Security in an International Specialist Banking Group

This case study was conducted in an international specialist banking group (described in 4.3.1). The particular consulting process occurred on an organisational level, pivoting on the theme of information security. Information is a key asset of

organisations and consequently needs to be appropriately managed and protected from a wide range of risks in order to ensure competitive advantage and business continuity. Information security is assisted by the implementation of an appropriate set of controls comprising policies, standards, procedures, structures and technology configurations.

In this particular organisation the task and responsibility for managing and protecting information was given to a person who will be referred to as James. James's role was described as: Group Information Security Officer (GISO). The GISO operated with a small team of people known as the Information Security Team (Info Sec Team, as they were referred to in the organisation). Some of them were based in South Africa and others in the United Kingdom. James was also based in the United Kingdom and managed the South African half of his team from London.

The primary task of the Info Sec team was to manage and protect the organisation's information. The GISO and his team were ultimately responsible for producing policies, standards and procedure related to information security; the business units were required to implement these guidelines. Some of the team members took up the role of consultants to the business units, assisting them with the implementation of these policies and also supporting them in identifying specific threats to the business units and the latter's vulnerabilities. The GISO was directly mandated by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the group to carry this responsibility and reported directly to the head of Group Information Technology (Group IT). The head of Group IT will be referred to as Marc.

The structure of IT in this organisation is largely decentralised, with an IT division in each business unit. A separate division known as Central IT (CIT) was responsible for the IT infrastructure (this would include all hardware, servers and voice technology) while a small team of people shouldered the responsibility of Group IT. Group IT takes strategic leadership, accountable for the whole IT domain in the organisation including information security.

The organisational structure is also important. The organisation under discussion, consists of a set of specialised banking divisions each with its own head and support functions. These divisions are accorded autonomy and operate like separate businesses. The autonomy given to the divisions comes with a high level of authority to make their own decisions and they are rarely, if ever, overridden by the top structure of the organisation. This structure serves to create an environment of entrepreneurship, one where individuals take on a high level of personal responsibility (see section 4.3.1).

Group decisions, in many cases, lie in the hands of the divisional leaders as a collective group. These decisions are made through a process of *robust dialogue*, referred to by the organisational members as *open and honest dialogue*. In the Information Technology world, the space for this kind of dialogue was the Group IT Management Committee (Group IT Manco, as it is referred to in this organisation). Group IT Manco is a monthly meeting attended by the heads of all business units, IT divisions, Central IT and the members of Group IT.

Other role players and forums of significance to this case study include: Group Risk, Internal Audit and the Technical Architecture Board (TAB). Group Risk performs the primary task of minimising the organisation's exposure to risk. The Internal Audit function helps the organisation to achieve its stated goals through the analysis of business processes, activities and procedures; highlighting problems and providing solutions. The TAB (Technical Architecture Board) is an advisory and decision-making forum that focuses on all technical architectural aspects of Information Technology. The TAB consists of key members of the Group IT Manco and other technical experts.

4.3 RESEARCH METHOD

The research method is explained in this section. Full descriptions of the research setting, entrée and the establishing of research roles, sampling, data collection methods, recording of data, data analyses, the strategies employed to ensure quality of data and the reporting style are supplied here.

4.3.1 Research Setting

The research presented in this thesis was conducted in the South African head office of an international specialist banking group. This organisation operates in a global financial market and has grown from a small South African leasing organisation in 1974 to a dually listed banking group with five specialist banking divisions in three primary geographies around the world: South Africa, United Kingdom and Australia.

The primary task of the organisation is to provide a diverse range of financial products and services to a niche client base. The global financial industry is extremely competitive, containing major global financial players who can easily “outmuscle” smaller institutions. The particular organisation is structured in terms of autonomous specialist business units. Each unit is focussed on areas in the market that require highly specialised banking solutions in order to “outsmart” in stead of “outmuscle”. The organisation is structured for nimbleness and flexibility. Each of the five specialist areas has a high level of decision-making authority and decentralised support functions. The authority of the business units is respected and they are rarely, if ever, overridden by the centre. The organisational model is one of a balance between centralisation and decentralisation in order to provide control and focus to the business units.

The organisation employs approximately 6500 people. Most of its founders are still active in it. The founder members are essentially entrepreneurs; hence the organisational culture and structure have ultimately developed around the necessity of the organisation and its members to be entrepreneurial. The organisation perceives this culture as its ultimate competitive advantage and leaders go to great lengths to keep the founder culture alive in this organisation. The centralised / decentralised structure of the organisation provides a healthy amount of tension that stimulates discussions and different viewpoints. The people in this organisation are, in general, individualistic, self driven and competitive. The organisational culture is confrontational and interactions between people are frank and direct. One of the stated organisational values is “open and honest dialogue”. This value is strongly encouraged and drives the directness of the discourse in the organisation. This value is

also sometimes referred to as “robust dialogue” or even as “open and honest debate”. Positional power and hierarchy are viewed as less important than a good track record and the ability to close deals. This belief in “flatness” is clearly present in the organisational artefacts such as the open plan structure of all buildings, the general practices that are culturally entrenched and the interactions between people on different levels.

The physical organisation in South Africa consists of seven branches in all the major regional locations with a head office building in Sandton, Johannesburg.

4.3.2 Entrée and Establishing Researcher Roles

The author (and student) took up three distinct roles in this research. The first was that of *the consultant*. The primary task of the consultant is to consult to the client system. The consultant in this research is a 36 year old, Afrikaans male with nine years of experience in organisational consulting. He is a registered psychologist and possesses a master’s degree in organisational and industrial psychology. He was trained as a systems psychodynamically informed consultant by the University of South Africa (UNISA), the Institute for the Study of Leadership and Authority (ISLA) as well as the International Society for the Psychoanalytical Study of Organisations (ISPSO). He consults to group and organisational processes on a daily basis using the systems psychodynamic framework as a primary consulting paradigm. He has three years of consulting experience in the organisation under study (also referred to here as the research organisation) and has gained extensive knowledge about the macro dynamics of this system. He is employed by the research organisation as organisation

development consultant. The organisation makes use of its own internal organisation development team. The team of consultants consists of nine people all with a background in psychology and consulting. The primary task of this team is to supply an internal organisation development consulting service to the individuals and teams in the organisation. The said team reports directly to the managing director of the organisation through a team leader and is separate from the human resources department.

The history of organisation development in this organisation is also significant. During the early years of the organisation's existence the founders used the services of an external consulting organisation. The head of this organisation subsequently joined the organisation and established the internal organisation development consulting team. The team now maintains a presence in each of the three major international geographical settings of the organisation. The historical roots of the team in this organisation accord to it a substantial degree of organisational authority.

The services of the team are available to all divisions and every team. Consultants work where they are needed. These needs are driven by requests from the different business units and specifically from the leadership teams of the different business units. Priorities are debated and contracted with these teams on an ongoing basis. Business units pay upfront for services through a charge out model and from then on enjoy full access to the service. Negotiations regarding service have much more to do with time than with money, given this model. The team experiences significant time constraints and must constantly assess the relative importance of client needs against each other.

It was fairly easy to gather case study data related to consulting processes, owing to these circumstances. Access was automatic as the researcher studied his own consulting process. All that was needed was permission from the clients that were part of the consulting processes described here.

In order to study his own consulting process the author took up the role of *participant observer* (Brewerton & Millward, 2001). In this second role the author witnessed the consulting process, described it, recorded it and tried to make sense of it, while at the same time being part of it (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002) (see section 4.3.4). The observations of the participant observer are reported in Chapter 5. Diamond and Allcorn (2009, p. 73) refer to “the analytical third” as “the inter-subjective dimension of the participant observer”. It is this inter-subjective third position that provides space for reflective inquiry. The third position is not a role in itself but a dimension of both the consultant and participant observer roles described above. The reflective inquiry in this research took place in both the *consultant role* and the *participant observer role* from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

The third role was that of *discourse researcher*. In this role the author conducted a systems psychodynamic discourse analysis of the data provided by the participant observer. The analysis was used to present a deeper level of interpretation of the research data. This final analysis is to be found in Chapter 6.

Each of the three roles is different in terms of time line, distance from the client system and the third observer dimension. The consultant role is the closest to the

client system. This role is not a research role, but forms part of the subject matter of the research. The consultant does take up the third position but only in relation to the client system and the consulting process at hand in each of the cases. The reader only experiences the consultant through the eyes of the participant observer in this research.

The participant observer is a research role. This role adopts the analytical third position for research purposes in order to describe the work of the consultant and the consulting process in each of the cases. This role was taken up at the same time as the consulting process but also after the consultation, during reflection.

The role of discourse researcher is the furthest removed from the client system. This role was taken up after the participant observer had recorded the research data and arrived at interpretations about it. In this role the author examined the discourse of the participant observer, sorted the data into themes and reached specific conclusions about the themes in the form of hypotheses. The themes and hypotheses were specifically focused on boundary management and boundary management consulting.

4.3.3 Sampling

Two case studies were used in this research (N= 2). The sampling method was theory based purposive sampling, also known as theoretical sampling. This is used to select specific cases where the construct of interest is manifested. “With theoretical sampling the researcher examines particular instances of the phenomenon of interest

so that he or she can define and elaborate on its various manifestations” (Tedlie & Tashakori, 2009, p. 177).

The researcher gathered information on several different consulting assignments during the initiation phase of these assignments as it was not possible to know the exact content and client needs that would be manifested when the assignment unfolded. The most promising case was followed and became Case A. It was important that boundary management formed a significant part of the consultation. This was the main criterion for inclusion. In theoretical sampling, each case provides information that leads to the selection of the next case (Tedlie & Tashakori, 2009). Case A in this research was supplemented by case B as is explained in the section to follow. Secondary influencing factors are also described here.

Motivation for the Inclusion of Case A

A strong manifestation of inter-group dynamics (Brunner et al, 2006) between several areas was evident in this case. It presented a range of boundary related issues on different levels and produced rich data for discussion on the topic of boundary management. On a more practical level, the climate study undertaken in the beginning of the consultation led to a substantial amount of written data that was a useful artefact to include in a case study research project. The particular team also had a tendency to capture decisions and processes in written form, leading to the availability of written data.

The scale of the consulting assignment was important. As mentioned, it focussed on one back office area of a single division in a single geographical region of an international bank. This is significant in contrast to the second case that was on a much greater scale. Boundary management took place in this case study without the inclusion of all role players and indicated clearly how one may operate within the boundaries of these limitations.

The case also presented the consultant with complex unconscious material. The particular case supplied good examples of collective organisational defences and the effects of anxiety.

On a more personal level the consultant viewed this consulting assignment as a successful one and invested much time and effort in it. There was also a strong relationship with the client.

Motivation for the Inclusion of Case B

A group-as-a-whole dynamic (Brunner et al, 2006; Wells, 1985) was presented to the consultant in this case. Confusion about roles and mandates provided the backdrop for several boundary related issues that needed attention. The case ended with an institutional event that created the transitional space for the organisation to re-negotiate its boundaries. All of this furnished useful data that could be studied.

The scale of the consultation was an important consideration as regards the inclusion of this case. It involved the whole organisation in terms of business units and support

functions and also two of the main geographies, South Africa and the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, as noted, complex unconscious psychodynamics were in play. Everything was not as it seemed and the very structure and philosophy of the organisation needed to be understood in order to consult to the tasks in this consulting assignment.

Lastly, the IT arena has been a consulting focus of the consultant for many years. A sound knowledge of the industry and the realities of IT in this particular organisation made it possible to gather data from many different sources and also to draw on past experiences and institutional memory.

It may be added that case B supplemented case A in terms of its scale and holistic nature. It was almost an ideal situation where all role players were present and the conversation took place on a grand scale (involving the whole organisation).

4.3.4 Data Collection Methodology

Data collection occurred during the course of the consulting process. Potter (2003, p. 81) pointed to the concept of actuality in discourse research: “If the researcher is concerned with counselling on an abused helpline, then counselling is studied (not reports of counselling, theorizing about counselling, conventionalized memories of counselling, and so on)”. The author therefore studied his own consulting process in the here and now. The consulting gave structure to data collection and was

intrinsically linked to the research. The process included the following steps: engagement, contracting, analysing, intervening and disengagement as described in Chapter 2. Each of the steps in the consulting process provided the researcher with data. Data was collected by means of observations, interviews and focus groups.

Participant observation was employed in this research. Brewerton and Millward (2001) describe participant observation as an unstructured process, entered into by the researcher without any preconceived ideas, codes or foci. In participant observation the researcher takes part in the activities, rituals, interactions and events of the group that is being studied (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). The unfolding of the consulting process in both cases was recorded by the researcher as a participant.

Ethnographic interviews represented a further source of data in this research and formed part of the consulting process. As earlier indicated, such interviews can be described as “a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants” (Flick, 2009). In this study these interviews were used to explore boundary issues during different stages of the consulting process.

The focus group method was employed in Case A as part of the consulting process. Focus groups have been defined as groups of people who are specifically recruited to discuss a particular topic of interest (Bernard, 2006). In Case A, natural teams were specifically interviewed about their experiences within their particular working context.

4.3.5 Recording of Data

The diary method (Brewerton & Millard, 2003) was utilised to record data. The researcher collected data during each step of the consulting process, working with field notes after interactions with the client system, as well as recording information during interactions with clients. All records were written notes of events or content made either by the consultant or members from the client system. Some of these records can also be described as artefacts. These included flip chart notes created during sessions, reports created after sessions and e-mails.

All these records were used to construct a case study data base and establish a chain of evidence (Riege, 2003). The different sources of data and evidence were used to create a narrative for each of the case studies. This was typed up and used as a working document. The steps of the consulting process provided a structure to this narrative.

4.3.6 Data Analysis

Systems psychodynamic discourse analysis was used to analyse the data (Smit & Cilliers, 2006). Analysis in discourse research, although considerably varied, proceeds through four stages as described by Potter (2003, pp. 83-87):

- (a) “Generating Hypotheses”: The discourse researcher formulates hypotheses or questions during the initial research process.
- (b) “Coding and Building of a Collection”: The coding process is a form of data reduction where phenomena are merged or separated as the researcher start to make sense of the subject under study.
- (c) “Doing the Analysis”: Hypotheses are tested and checked at this point. Patterns of behaviour may be of importance during this process.
- (d) “Validating the Analysis”: Validation and analysis are linked in this type of research. The accumulation of findings from different studies (known as coherence) among other approaches is used to increase validity.

The formulation of hypotheses in this research is focussed on boundary management consulting. All hypotheses are formulated from the *discourse researcher* position. Interpretations and hypothesis building took place from a systems psychodynamic perspective as described in Chapter 2. In systems psychodynamic terminology the analysis was focused on organisational boundaries, boundary management and consulting to boundary management. The *working hypothesis* model (Haslebo & Nieldon, 2000) as explained in Chapter 2 was used by the consultant in consultation, and by the participant observer and discourse researcher as a research tool. The aim of using working hypotheses is to construct theory around the concept of boundary management within a consulting context. In this research the term *working hypothesis* refers to any open ended conceptualisation of the researcher about the meaning of the research data. These ideas or conceptualisations are developed and refined until they can finally be presented as a research hypothesis.

In this research two sets of hypotheses were constructed. The first related to organisational boundary management (content) while the second related to boundary management consulting (process). Data analysis was undertaken on different levels. The first level of analysis and interpretation occurred on the consultant level. These interpretations are not research interpretations but are in fact part of the research data. They were constructed by the consultant and can be seen as a facet of the consulting process (see section 2.2). They are referred to as *consultant interpretations* [italics added] in the text. They reflect the systems psychodynamic interpretations of the consultant. These interpretations are presented by *the participant observer* in Chapter 5. On the next level, hypotheses were constructed about the consulting process and the work of the consultant as well as boundary management in general. These hypotheses are referred to as *working hypotheses* in the text and were constructed from the *discourse researcher's* [italics added] position. This was done for each of the two cases. The coding process (Potter, 2003) meant that hypotheses were viewed in relation to each other. The hypotheses for each case study were then finalised by merging hypotheses that built on each other or separating hypotheses where more focus was needed. At this point the researcher had derived two sets of hypotheses (one about boundary management and one about boundary management consulting) for each of the two cases.

The next level of coding was an accumulation of findings from both cases. The coherence of hypotheses (Potter, 2003) stemming from the two cases was checked; the process of merging and separation was followed for one more time. A final set of hypotheses emerged. These hypotheses were checked against the data from the two case studies and finally correlated with existing literature in the field.

4.3.7 Strategies Employed to Ensure Quality Data

The author and consultant in this study used himself as an instrument of analysis (Heslebo & Nielsen, 2000; McCormick & White, 2000). In other words, he applied his knowledge of systems psychodynamics and utilised his own subjective experience to make sense of the client system and to interpret his experience (see section 2.2).

The validity and reliability of this case study research design was ensured through the application of the techniques prescribed by Riege (2003):

Construct validity was ensured through the use of multiple sources of evidence; establishing a chain of events; and the review of the draft case study report:

In this study multiple sources of data collection were utilised, including interviews, observation and artifacts such as flip chart notes, e-mails and process notes as well as reports by participants. Interviews, events and observations were documented. Cross checks with different data sources were carried out. This also formed part of the consulting approach. As hypotheses were formed they were tested and verified against different sources of data. Interview notes, consulting notes and parts of the data analysis were checked with different role players and consulting clients. This was done telephonically or during face to face follow up interviews. Changes were made to aspects that were unclear.

Internal Validity of findings was assured through cross checks of data in the data analysis phase.

Reliability was ensured by: providing a full account of theories and ideas for each research phase, assuring congruence between research issues and the features of the study, the concrete recordings of actions and observations, and peer reviews.

The theories, frameworks and models for this study are outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis. Very clear criteria for case study selection were defined in order to select case studies for this research so as to ensure congruence between research issues and the features of the study. Events and observations were documented. Some of the findings in this research study were confirmed with peers and experts in the field of consulting, systems psychodynamics, organisation consulting psychology and organisation development.

All the other methods and approaches listed in this chapter also contributed to ensuring the quality of the data in this research.

4.3.8 Reporting

In Chapter 5, the first level of research findings is considered. These findings represent an initial level of psychodynamic interpretation (see Chapter 2) regarding what took place in the two cases. This first level of analysis (Potter, 2003) was conducted from the participant observer's perspective (see section 4.3.2). The first level of reporting is also undertaken separately for each of the cases. The findings are

presented more or less in chronological order. The initial coding process (see 4.3.6) deals with the dynamics focused on and interpretations offered by the consultant during the two consultations. In other words, the interpretations presented in this section are those that the consultant made as the consulting process unfolded. These interpretations are labelled *consultant interpretations* (see 4.3.6) and form part of the case study data. They are artifacts of the consultant's thinking during the consultation. This focus is a first attempt at creating a collection or coding (see 4.3.6).

In Chapter 6 the author presents a second level of analysis of the same cases reported in Chapter 5. The analysis in the earlier chapter is now unravelled and categorised through the use of collections of data (4.3.6). In Chapter 5 the thoughts and interpretations of the consultant were viewed through the eyes of the participant observer. In Chapter 6 a further analysis by the *discourse researcher* (see section 4.3.2) is added. Consequently the analysis now becomes broader in terms of the process, but also more specific in terms of the content. In Chapter 5 the analysis focused on the client system, the dynamics of this client system and the beliefs and assumptions of the consultant during the consultation. In Chapter 6 the analysis concentrates more specifically on boundary management (content) and in a broader sense, not only on the client system, but also on the consultant, the consulting work and the consulting process. Three different collections of data are provided. The first set relates to *boundary management*; the second to *the role and tasks of the consultant*, and the last to the *consulting process*. The decision to code data according to these three broad themes was taken on the grounds of the discussion in Chapters 2 and 3. The focus here, falling on boundary management specifically, means that

certain dynamics presented in Chapter 5 are omitted in Chapter 6 because they are not relevant in terms of the author's framework with respect to boundary management.

Using the three collections (boundary management; role and tasks of the consultant; and the consulting process) two distinct sets of working hypotheses are developed. The hypotheses in this section are labelled *working hypotheses*. The first set is focused on the systems psychodynamics of boundary management as a task of the organisation whereas the second concerns boundary management consulting as a task of the consultant. Since these hypotheses are presented as working hypotheses (Haslebo & Nielsen, 2000), they are open ended. They can inform each other. For this reason they are integrated with each other and used as second tier data to distill new hypotheses. Every new hypothesis contains the essence of the previous hypotheses on which it is based (Haslebo & Nielsen, 2000).

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter described the empirical research conducted in this study. It provided the reader with a detailed description of the empirical foundations of this thesis. It was followed by a description of the sociotechnical background of the research setting and the two case studies that were chosen. The consulting process employed was explained in terms of each of the two case studies. The reasons for including these specific case studies were adduced and the research method explained.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS – LEVEL ONE

In this Chapter the first level of research findings is considered. These findings are described from a *participant observer perspective*. This observer describes the consulting process, activities and interventions of the consultant and also reflects on these activities. All the interpretations in this chapter are based on the concepts and models explained in Chapters 2 and 3. The Chapter also includes specific quotes from the client system. This helps to re-create the *feeling* of the consultation and illustrates the actuality (Potter, 2003) of the research. See section 4.3.8.

Each case is presented in two sections: The Consulting Process and The Consultation. Under *The Consulting Process* the participant observer describes key events and interactions during the consulting process. These events are listed in sequence according to the consulting process used by the consultant. This includes the major consulting steps: engaging, contracting, analysing, intervening, and disengaging, as defined in Chapter 2. The sections on *engaging* afford background and context to each of the case studies. This section also includes information on the initial contact with the client. It explains the initial thinking of the consultant when each of the consulting assignments begins. In the *contracting* section the reader is taken through the thinking and planning process within the consultant as the consulting assignment unfolded. It also includes descriptions of the work settings that the consultant chose. In the *analysing* section, the data gathering and diagnosing phases of each of the consulting

assignments are explained. The interventions that were used are explained in terms of *intervening* while the final phase of the consulting process is discussed with respect to *disengaging*. The consulting method for both case studies is the systems psychodynamic consulting stance, as explained in Chapter 2. Under *The Consultation* the participant observer describes how the consultant understood the dynamics in the system and also how he approached the consultation. Some retrospective interpretations and observations are also offered here.

In Chapter 6, specific themes, collections and hypotheses about boundary management and boundary management consulting are presented from the perspective of the *discourse researcher*.

5.1 CASE A: LEADERSHIP IN BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES

Case A presented powerful intergroup dynamics to the consultant; much of his focus was directed to the relationships and the relatedness between the front and back office in the securities division.

5.1.1 The Consulting Process

In this section the consulting process followed by the consultant is unpacked according to the consulting framework discussed in section 2.5. The reader is taken through the consultation from a process perspective. The description of the consultation process happens from the position of participant observer. This is a first

attempt to make sense of the different activities and interactions that may be associated with each of the steps in the process.

- **Engagement**

The choice to work with the leadership team of Business Support Services (BSS) had more to do with the fact that they had approached the consultant than a strategy concerning where to work in the system. One may however conclude that its members were ready to do work and for that reason approached a consultant. More systemically, it can be hypothesised that they were unconsciously chosen by the larger system to present the problems of the organisation. All of these aspects made them a good point of entry into the organisation.

BSS came to the attention of the consultant when its business was restructured. He met the leadership team of BSS because its members were concerned about all the structural changes in their area and wanted a climate study to be conducted. The first meeting with them was via the functional head, Michael. By the time the meeting took place, the consultant had already worked with the Securities Division and was involved in the restructure of Financial Management Services (FMS) that led to the establishment of BSS. Michael was directly involved in this process and had built up some trust with the consultant through the processes that were followed to create the new FMS structure. Michael, at this point, had no direct relationship with the consultant. In the initial meeting Michael provided the consultant with some of the history surrounding his team and the broader division.

When he was appointed there was a great deal of expectation from the front office that Michael should “rid the back office of its incompetence”. When he began he observed numerous problems and did not view these accusations as unfounded. Michael explained the situation as he perceived it at that point: “they had the wrong people in the wrong jobs”, “people were not skilled to do their jobs and there was no IT governance”. He initiated a process of repair. He introduced new people, he moved people around, he altered job descriptions and began with an education process. At the point that the first consulting meeting took place, Michael felt that “things were starting to settle down in BSS”, but he was not sure how people felt about all the changes. He was concerned that all the turmoil might have damaged the “morale” of people and the “climate” of the working environment but was unable to articulate reasons for his concern clearly.

He invited the consultant to meet the rest of his team in a second meeting. The idea was to confirm with the team leaders whether they believed an intervention was required. The team at that point was brand new as some of the team leaders had not been reporting to Michael before the restructure of FMS. Some of the team leaders seemed sceptical about Michael’s suggestion to bring in a consultant. Much discussion revolved around the role of the consultant and what the support of such a person would really mean. The team leaders expressed concerns about confidentiality. They were concerned that the consultant could expose them and threaten their positions in the organisation. These fears were not completely unfounded as the consultant was an internal organisation development consultant. After some agreement about confidentiality the team was prepared to “talk about work”.

During this meeting the team leaders agreed that they wanted to know how their team members felt about the changes in the area, what the latter thought about them as a leadership team and the reporting structure; and how they were experiencing their current working environment. There were concerns that some people might be unhappy with the new reporting lines and as, Michael had explained previously, that all the changes in the division might have damaged morale and the climate.

It was agreed that the consultant should meet with each of the teams in BSS and compile a collective report about key issues. It was further agreed that team specific issues would be shared with the team leaders responsible. The latter made the decision not to be present in the discussions with their teams.

(a) Contracting

In this case a large part of the formal contract was already on the table in terms of the internal consultant's role and task as explained in 4.3.2.

The primary task of this consulting assignment was to deal with splits between the front and back office and within the back office by strengthening the leadership team in BSS. The splits in the system were hindering collaboration between the front office and their support staff, leading to performance issues and conflict. The splits in the back office made them ineffective and unable to respond to the demands of the front office. The team leaders in the back office needed to be aligned with each other and to be authorised by the front office and their staff. This was, however, not apparent from

the start. The primary task in this case changed as the consulting assignment progressed and unfolded.

After the initial meetings with Michael and the leadership team of BSS, it was contracted that the official consulting process would start with an analysis of the climate in the area. At this point much was still unclear. The consultant's thinking was that the climate study would afford a good opportunity to enter the organisation and to start understanding the dynamics of the client system.

He used the team leaders' meeting as a collective planning session and agreed to plan as matters progressed. He agreed with them that confidentiality would be a priority and that individuals would be protected during the feedback phase of the climate study. The leaders agreed that a collective opinion from the staff would be sufficient and that no one on one interviews would be conducted. They also agreed that the climate study would be qualitative. The consultant would meet with each team in BSS. They were to be encouraged to describe their experiences as part of BSS and also to talk about their interactions with other teams. Feedback about leadership in the area was also on the agenda. It was contracted that the team leaders would not be present when the consultant met their teams. The team leaders would also meet the consultant without its leader, Michael, to speak about the leadership team and their own experience of management.

The climate study feedback led to the planning of a leadership team session. The thinking at this point was that a fundamental shift was needed in the leadership of BSS. Time away from work, to think together, seemed like a good idea. The primary

task of the leadership team session was for the team leaders to work through the information provided by the climate survey and to produce an action plan for the way forward. It was also agreed that the session would serve as a team building intervention and that the team leaders would share their life stories with each other. This is an important ritual in the particular organisation and is used as a way to honour the individualism of each person in the organisation. According to the consultant it also serves as a relationship building intervention.

The leadership team session led to the planning of a team performance feedback session. This session was conducted about two months after the leadership workshop. It is a standard process in this particular organisation. The team feedback session provides the opportunity for each and every team member to receive feedback from every other team member, in a public meeting. The team began with a review of their objectives and then proceeded to provide feedback to each individual in terms of the set criteria. The primary task of the team feedback session was to align skills, attitudes, and personal style to the team objectives and the identity of the team. It was also aimed at the alignment of the “role in the mind” of different team members.

(b) Analysing

Analysis occurred throughout the consulting process. The initial meeting with Michael, as well as the next meeting with the team leaders, was a source of diagnostic information. The consultant’s knowledge of the organisation and the division in which BSS found itself also provided a great deal of insight into the diagnostic aspect of this consulting assignment.

The consultant used himself as an instrument of analysis throughout the consulting process. Each meeting and likewise each intervention provided more data to the consultant. The data was analysed according to the systems psychodynamic perspective, and working hypotheses were formed. Further data was gathered to add to or discard the working hypotheses. (See section 2.2 for a full description of the systems psychodynamic perspective, using the self as instrument and the use of working hypotheses.)

The climate survey was the only formal diagnostic intervention in this case. The consultant found the dynamics around this survey in many ways more informative than the actual results of the survey. In other words, the way the client system responded to the survey provided more insights on some level than the actual content of the conversations.

(c) Intervening

There were three major interventions in this consultation. The first was the climate survey, the second the team leader workshop and the third the team performance feedback session. Each of these interventions was surrounded by a host of minor interventions. These included all the interactions with the members of the client system.

(d) Disengaging

After the team performance feedback session the plan was to provide the team leaders with space to take up their new roles in the organisation. The consulting contract altered at this point. Meetings were much less regular and consulting went into a maintenance phase. The consulting relationship was subsequently handed over to another consultant. This ended the consultant's engagement with BSS.

5.1.2 The Consultation

When the consultant first crossed the boundary into the Securities division there was a significant split (Armstrong et al, 2004) between the back office and their client facing front office counterparts. It seems as if performance related anxiety had a role to play. The organisation being studied, as explained in Chapter 4, displays a very confrontational culture. Employees feel exposed (some reported that they feel “there is nowhere to hide”) and the pressure to perform is very severe. It is highly probable that the front office employees found themselves in the paranoid schizoid position (section 2.2) in order to lessen the negative feelings they were experiencing. The consultant believed that the split between the front and back office in the securities division was an unconscious defence against performance anxiety (Gould, Stapeley & Stein, 2004) in the system. He noticed that the split was reinforced by fight and flight behaviour (Bion, 1961) between the two areas. There was a significant amount of conflict between the two areas, leading to arguments and heated debates. At other times the two areas would avoid each other, leading to a lack of communication. The consultant observed role conflict (see section 3.1.2) and boundary management (see section 3.2) issues between the front and back office areas. The role conflict was

specifically related to the role of the back office, leading to boundary issues (this is explained later).

The consultant believed the conflict was fuelled by the front office opinion that Financial Management Services (FMS, as the back office was called at that time) was incompetent. FMS seemed to be a dumping ground (see section 2.2) for matters that went wrong in the division. There was evidence which pointed to the possibility that the front office had projected (Blackman, 2004) the incompetence and failures of the front office division onto FMS. The most overwhelming evidence was present in a larger organisational dynamic. Scapegoating (see section 2.2) played out throughout the front and back office functions of this organisation. This group wide dynamic was characterised by huge authority differences (Obholzer & Roberts, 1994) between front and back office functions. The front office in general seemed to carry more authority due to its proximity to clients (Clegg et al, 2006) within a very deal centred environment (see Chapter 4). The consultant was familiar with this organisational dynamic and deliberately collected data about the way that the relationship between the front and back office was constructed. The consultant had reason to believe that the staff members in the back office were perceived as service providers to the front office. One may say that the *organisation in the mind* (Armstrong, 2004) of the front office placed the back office in a position where it had to deliver at all costs and commanded very little authority to confront the front office directly. Measured against the values of the organisation, which promoted “non hierarchical” behaviour and “open and honest dialogue” (see 4.3.1), this was an unacceptable situation (psychologically) to the employees in the back office.

The consultant further believed the situation (the inferior position of the back office) was perpetuated through projective identification (see section 2.2) on the part of the latter. This was evident in the use of language in the back office such as: “if we deliver, our relationship with the front office will improve”. The back office believed that it was being treated badly by the front office because of delivery issues. On the surface this was correct. The consultant however noticed evidence that suggested something more complex under the surface. The delivery issues were grounded in systemic realities (Fugua & Newman, 2002) in which the front office also had a role to play. The back office was unable to see this. Its staff began to believe that even the function they performed was inferior. This developed to the point where the back office started to service third parties in order to become an income generating entity. This turn of events offered further evidence of the feelings of inferiority suffered by the back office. This, it seems, was the only way that they could prove their worthiness to the critical front office. The result was failure, since the function progressively steered away from its primary task as support function to the securities business. The choice to service third parties seemed so irrational to the consultant that it was hard not to see it as unconsciously motivated. The back office played into the script of incompetence and acted out a self fulfilling prophecy (Paglis, 2008). At this point FMS was restructured and Business Support Services (BSS) was formed.

The consultant met Michael, the head of BSS (Business Support Services) when FMS was restructured. This restructuring was the last step in a range of changes driven by the Chief Operating Officer of the Securities division. At this point Michael, the head of BSS, approached the consultant. During this first conversation it was clear to the consultant that Michael had been appointed to “fix” things. It was as if he was being

set up from the start to play the “hero” or “saviour” (Hirschhorn & Young, 1991) of the function. It seemed from the start as if Michael knew, unconsciously, that this projected fantasy (Hirschhorn, 1997; Hirschhorn & Young, 1991) could get him into trouble. He also knew that all the changes and “fixing” of issues would further strain relationships and morale in the area. An immediate connection was formed between Michael and the consultant. This initial connection was possibly based on an idealisation (Blackman, 2004) of the consultant by Michael. The consultant, on the other hand, might have been seduced (Kets de Vries, 2009) by this behaviour. On a more conscious level the consultant experienced Michael to be a “no nonsense” leader with good intentions, and it was easy to trust him. Michael suggested a meeting with his entire team.

Michael and his leadership team made the suggestion that a climate study should be carried out. This was possibly a flight (Bion, 1961) into surveying. In other words the survey made the leaders feel more in control because it helped them to believe that they were attending to the problem, whereas unconsciously it was avoidance of working with the complexity of the situation and the relationships at hand. It could also have been motivated by their idealisation (Blackman, 2004) of the consultant. This is the belief that the consultant “knows best” and will “fix” the problem or make it miraculously disappear. On the surface however it seemed very clear that there was some kind of disconnection between the team leaders and their teams. They wanted feedback from their team members and a survey done by an “expert” consultant seemed like a good idea. It was as if they unconsciously knew that they would have to change. Consciously, they were also sensing the distance between them and their staff.

Their concept of such a survey was that the consultant would meet with each individual in Business Support Services and interview them about their experiences. The consultant suggested, rather, meeting with entire teams. He believed this approach would provide the opportunity to work with the system in a less fragmented way. Unconsciously this might have been a social defence against the complexity of dealing with individual realities in an already complex situation. Nevertheless, he understood the leadership team's suggestion to work with individuals to be a symptom of the system's loss of connectedness and the presence of the basic assumption of "me-ness" (Lawrence, 2000). There was evidence that the back office used me-ness to deal with pressure. Significant time was spent on discussions to work out where work started and ended for individuals. This was indicative of the boundary issues (see section 3.2) in the area but it also pointed to the fact that people tried to focus on "what is theirs" as if they could operate as individuals. The me-ness defence seemed to be a way to manage the anxiety caused by pressure from the front office. Emotionally and psychologically it made sense (see section 2.2) but on the surface it caused problems. A clear example was the way in which the "business analysts" would make promises to the front office and initiate projects without consulting the teams who needed to deliver on the requests sufficiently. This led to "bottle necks" in the delivery chain and ultimately "deadlines being moved out".

Working with teams as a whole also seemed more appropriate (to the consultant), owing to the culture of the organisation (see section 4.3.1). The consultant, at this point, was not entirely conscious of the seduction and the flight into surveying that seemed to have motivated this initial intervention. He did understand that this survey

was not the “real work yet”, but it seemed like a good opportunity to gather information and learn more about the client system.

- **The Climate Survey**

The qualitative nature of the climate study (see 4.3.4) provided the opportunity to collect data that was relevant to the moment. All teams had the opportunity to talk about their teams in the context of the greater division. This provided information about the organisation in the mind (Armstrong, 2004). They were also asked about their relationship with other teams. Through this line of interviewing, information about boundaries (see Chapter 3), interrelatedness (Cilliers & Smit, 2006; Fugua & Newman, 2002) and cross-boundary collaboration (see section 3.2.1) was revealed to the consultant. It also helped him to understand the splits and defences (see section 2.2) in the system better. Lastly, all teams were interviewed about their team leader and the broader leadership team. This was useful in understanding the conceptualisation of the leadership team in the minds (Armstrong, 2004) of the members.

On an unconscious level the climate study symbolised a caring, nurturing leadership style (something that was absent in the system). The consultant represented the leadership team, providing a nurturing environment where people are listened to and where everything they say is noted. The consultant, at this point, also played into the “expert consultant” label. People perceived the consultant as a saviour (Hirschhorn & Young, 1991), someone who could hear them and help their leaders to “see the light”.

This was apparent from the many expectations that were raised by means of the climate survey intervention.

- **Climate Survey Feedback**

After the climate study was conducted the team leaders received feedback, first individually and then as a team. The survey provided evidence that the environment in BSS was experienced as “unsupportive” and “not caring”. It revealed “strategic misalignment” between teams and the “absence of leadership”. There was a significant split (Gould et al, 2004) among the staff: between “old people” and “new people”. The basic assumption group (Bion, 1961) in this case was one of fighting characterised by destructive competition and continuous technical debates. The new people regarded the old ones as “incompetent” whereas the old people perceived the new ones as “anti cultural”. Both of these labels (roles) (Gemmill & Kraus, 1988) carried projections. The new people projected (see section 2.2) their own incompetence, while the old people denied the fact that they also sometimes disobeyed the accepted values of the organisation. All of this led to further polarisation between the “old” and “new” people because each group carried things on behalf of the other. The relationship between BSS and the front office was underlined as “dysfunctional” in the feedback session. Labelling the relationship as pathology (dysfunctional) could certainly be viewed as a defence used by the consultant. Such a defence could have hindered working with the dynamics in the system.

The consultant chose to focus on the role of the team leaders within the feedback. This seemed to be the reality most manageable for him at the time. All the feedback to the team leaders pointed out that they were expected (by staff) to "lead" but were in fact "managing". The conceptual difference between "leading" and "managing" was apparent in the way that staff spoke about these terms. On a fundamental level the conceptual difference seemed to be that leadership was about "creating a context for performance, providing direction and caring and developing people", while managing was about "driving delivery and focusing on tasks and performance". Organisational members also made a distinction between "hard stuff" (tasks, performance and outputs) and "soft stuff" (people focused activities). The leadership team in BSS seemed to have focused all their time and energy on "managerial" tasks. This simplification (Menzies, 1993) of their own role seemed to be a defence against the complexity of the task of leadership. As they drove tasks and performance they caused the anxiety (Cooper & Dartington, 2004) among their staff to escalate, leading to more splits and unhealthy dynamics. The anxiety of the team leaders increased as they tried to deliver in terms of the expectations of the front office. They tried to manage this anxiety by "driving their people" harder. The more they drove performance, the less they planned, coordinated and prioritised, leading to even more pressure and anxiety. They "had no time" to provide direction or containment (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbeaert, 2008) or any form of effective leadership. It was a vicious cycle. One may say that the performance of the leadership team suffered because of its members' irrational flight away from rational management and leadership of their area.

The team leaders' own feedback in the climate survey made it clear that they were a team in name but not in the mind. In their minds they were a group of singletons: "we are only a team in name". The basic assumption of me-ness was apparent throughout this system as a defence and the situation was no different for the leadership team. The consultant believed at this point in time that the assumption of me-ness helped people to escape the collective feelings of inferiority and incompetence that the back office was feeling as a result of projections (see section 2.2) from the front office and the corresponding projective identification (Haslebo & Nielsen, 2000) of the back office as described earlier.

The team leaders idealised (Blackman, 2004) the idea of being a "real team". The consultant believed idealisation was a response to the loneliness that individuals were feeling in this system. Many of the leaders explained how they were "on their own". The idea of a team must have been a comforting thought. The idealisation of a team where people care about one another and support each other had a maternal quality to it. All of this seemed to constitute evidence that the back office had unconscious needs to be looked after, "supported", loved and "cared for" (Huffington, Halton, Armstrong, Hoyle & Pooley, 2004).

During the climate survey discussions the team leaders provided a substantial amount of evidence that their primary identity revolved around "managerial tasks" and "driving delivery". They referred to themselves as "task masters". They believed that they had lost the "softer stuff" that should have been part of their role and identity. They believed they lost their way and direction as leaders.

The discussion with the team leaders further raised awareness in the consultant that they were not adequately containing the anxiety (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbeaert, 2008) in the system. The cycle of driving performance, neglecting to plan and coordinate and then inadequately applying resources, leading to more performance issues, was key evidence. Team members realised that their leaders were in fact not respected by the front office and they did not feel safe. The organisational holding environment was unsafe (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbeaert, 2008).

At this point the consultant formed three sets of interpretations about the client system:

Consultant Interpretation A: *Misalignment exists between the team leaders, their staff and the front office. This misalignment of “organisation in the mind” is driving disintegration of the Securities Division.*

The misalignment that the consultant refers to took place on different levels. Firstly, there was misalignment between the way the leaders in BSS took up their roles as leaders and the expectations of their staff. Secondly, the concept that the entire back office held in their minds of their own identity, role and task in the division was different from the concept that the front office held of them (the organisation in the mind).

The consultant concluded, based on these ideas, that Business Support Services was not sufficiently integrated (see section 3.2.1). All the misalignment led to disappointment, frustration, conflict and, ultimately, splitting (Gould, Stapley & Stein,

2004). Splitting was held in place by the convenient channel it provided to project and scapegoat the back office. A further symptom of the misalignment of the organisation in the mind was that the team leaders developed abilities that were in disequilibrium with the expectations of the front office and their staff.

These dynamics should be viewed in the context of the greater organisation. The particular organisation is very flat structured. This does not only refer to the amount of leadership layers in the organisation but to the amount of authority, accountability and responsibility (see sections 2.2 and 4.3.1) accorded to people in the organisation. A high degree of responsibility is placed on individuals. People are exposed in terms of performance and there are very few structural containing mechanisms (Gooijer, 2009). It is hard for divisions to blame up and down the organisational hierarchy in order to deal with anxiety. The culture of the organisation thrives on “tensions” between different areas as a driving force of dialogue, growth and change (see 4.3.1). It seems as if the organisation as a whole attempts to keep itself in a state of healthy conflict in order to stimulate interactions between people. It balances the conflict by a strong culture of dialogue, openness and communication (see 4.3.1). Very mature leadership, it appears, is needed to effectively contain a system of this sort (Cobbeaert, 2008).

Consultant Interpretation B: *The many splits in the organisation lead to fragmentation. This fragmented organisation continuously struggles to relate and collaborate, leading to an inability to perform its primary task.*

Building on the previous interpretations, the assumption here is that there are many splits. In other words the organisation has differentiated (see section 3.2.1) too much, leading to fragmentation and unnecessary conflict. Functional organisational divisions are there to focus the energy of people on the right strategic tasks while splits are dysfunctional (see section 3.2.1). The consultant was of the opinion that the splits were driven by unconscious dynamics but also by misalignment with respect to identity, role and task between different organisational sub-systems. The consultant believed that a more integrated (3.2.1) organisation would be less anxious and as a result split less.

Consultant Interpretation C: *There is a lack of shared idea of identity, role and primary task between the leaders in BSS, leading to misalignment with the front office and a perceived absence of leadership among their staff.*

The consultant believed that greater integration in the Securities division would be possible if the leadership team of BSS could create a shared idea of identity, role and primary task within their team and align their skills and knowledge with these conceptualisations.

The team leaders played a role and performed tasks that were largely prescribed by the front office. Paradoxically, this did not lead to a functional relationship with the front office, nor did it provide the proper direction and containment for their staff. This dynamic highlights the level of de-authorisation that took place between the front and back office. A further part of the problem was that different members of the BSS leadership team occupied different roles in the mind (see sections 2.2 & 3.1.2) so that

no shared view was present. There was also no clear sense of a shared leadership identity between them. It was evident to the consultant, from discussions with these leaders, that they held very different ideas about what it meant to be leaders in their context.

It seemed that more integration (see 3.2.1) of the leadership team was needed. This would enable them to establish their boundaries and create alignment around their identity, role and primary task in the division (see 3.2). This would also allow them to build abilities in the team that would support them in taking up leadership in the division.

The consultant made use of a two day team leader workshop to provide a transitional space (Winnicott, 1971) in which the leaders could reflect on the feedback they had received, their role in the system and the challenges that they were facing. This was also a process where the consultant could now step out of the role of “expert” and hand responsibility back to the leaders. (It was mentioned earlier that the climate survey had placed the consultant in the role of an expert.)

- **The Team Leader Workshop**

The workshop began with each of the team leaders telling their life stories to the rest. These stories were powerful accounts of personal identity. The team leaders wanted to come to know each other better but on an unconscious level this was also a ritual (Lamoreaux, 2008) by which each individual identity could be honoured before the team could look at some form of collective or shared identity. The implication is that

individual identities do not have to be diminished to make way for a group identity (see section 3.1.1). Both can exist side by side and could be compatible.

After the individual stories the team members started to discuss their own identity (see section 3.1.1) as a team and also their primary task (Rice, 1963) in the division. They described their identity on a pure task level. Their responsibilities were to “drive delivery; apply their expertise; look after their staff and each other; coordinate and plan; bring innovation and technology to the business; and manage cost and resources consulting to the business; building relationships with the business and fostering the organisation’s culture in their teams”. They agreed that they were spending 80% of their time to “drive delivery” and the other 20% of their time to coordinate and plan, with no focus whatsoever on any of the other aspects (leadership tasks focused on people). As a result of the discussion they realised that they were being “managers”, rather than “leaders”.

This was a significant discussion because, by listening to the climate feedback that they had received previously and being more honest with themselves, they began to own some of their own incompetence (see section 2.2). Furthermore they agreed that they were in fact making things worse by placing so much pressure on their people. They realised that they needed to take up the leadership roles that they had “neglected” for so long. This move from “manager” to “leader” was a significant shift in primary identity (Rice, 1963). They realised that even managerial tasks such as “planning, coordinating and prioritising” were neglected while leadership tasks such as “communicating, providing the big picture and building culture and morale” were completely negated. A new primary task as a leadership team started to emerge.

Where they had formerly existed only to “drive performance” they would now exist to “create a context for performance”. This primary task concerns creating a holding environment and providing containment (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008).

Much discussion revolved around the relationship of the leadership team with their front office “partners”. They needed to build much stronger relationships with an “internal client base” that were deeply critical of them. The group engaged in an exercise where they coupled key people within their client base with corresponding people in their team who had existing relationships with those people. They decided to engage in relationship building activities on a weekly basis, offering feedback to each other during their weekly meeting.

This discussion also proved to be a significant shift in the group’s identity. In the past they had accepted their role and identity as “taskmasters” to their staff and “service providers” to the front office. In this discussion they redefined their relationship with the front office as a “partnership”. The word “partnership” carries very strong meaning in this particular organisation as a core organisational value. The word in this context implies a relationship that is more or less “equal” and implies the relative absence of hierarchy and positional power. The identity of “partner” to the front office implied a much greater level of self authorisation (Hirschhorn (1997) than before. On a psychodynamic level the word *partnership* also activates the idea of pairing and intimacy. Perhaps a partnership with the front office implied the rebirth of a division.

One may suggest the interpretation that the team leaders’ workshop led to a redefinition of their identity and also started the effort towards creating a shared

identity (see section 3.1.1) in the organisation. The group members also re-evaluated their primary task and role in the division. From all of this a set of shared beliefs emerged. The team leaders also agreed that the new tasks and behaviours would mean new skills. At this point the decision was made to conduct a team performance feedback session where each team member would receive feedback from each other member.

At this point, two more interpretations emerged. The consultant believed these described symptoms rather than the cause of the problem but were important because they provided information regarding dysfunctional aspects in the system and how they were held in place.

Consultant Interpretation D: *The inability of the back office leaders to connect to their staff is driven by their tendency to project incompetence onto staff members, blaming them for poor performance while they [the leaders] are not providing adequate leadership and direction.*

The consultant focussed once again on the splits and projections in the system, resulting in the disintegration of the organisation. Disintegration here is used as the polar opposite to integration (see 3.2.1). The team leaders tried to please the front office at all costs. They adopted the identity of service providers. By identifying with this role they diminished their own authority and allowed an abusive relationship with the front office where they were constantly scapegoated for everything that went wrong in the division. They were unable to contain their own anxiety and mirrored the behaviour of the front office by blaming their staff for “non-delivery”.

From the staff's perspective they were not providing effective leadership in the division. Staff did not know where the function was heading strategically nor did they understand how they fitted into the big picture. They were unsure of what the organisation expected of them and the working conditions were "unpleasant". These expectations were hard for the team leaders to meet as long as they were not adequately integrated as a team.

Consultant Interpretation E: *The leadership team unconsciously identified with the front office as aggressor. This introjection led to them displaying similar behaviours to those of the front office towards their staff.*

The state of the team leaders, it seems, also had to do with unconscious identification (Blackman, 2004) with the front office as aggressor. Over time, their continuous interactions with a hostile front office led to a shift from identification to introjection. This introjection of the aggressor (Stapely, 2006) led to "harsh" behaviour toward their staff. This in turn led to a breakdown in relationships.

The leadership team were required to work through a complex range of "stuff". They were not sure what belonged to them and what did not (Haslebo & Nielsen, 2000). This was also an old dynamic that had already begun when FMS still existed. It was important that they could reach the point where they knew what incompetence they needed to own and what they did not. This was only possible when they uncovered the identity and primary task that they needed in the function.

The team leaders' workshop was followed by the team performance feedback session. The aim of this session was to “build” and align the capabilities of the leadership team in relation to their newly defined identity, role and tasks as leaders.

- **Team Performance Feedback Session**

The feedback focused on the attitudes, skills and behaviours needed by the team leaders in order to successfully take up the new identity of “leaders and partners” and the primary task of “creating an environment of performance and providing containment”. Most of the feedback in this session can be categorised under either of these two broad topics. This intervention was chosen by the consultant to support the team leaders in making sense of their new roles. (See sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.5.)

Feedback was given on the following topics: “career guidance, driving delivery, applying expertise, coordinating and planning, building relationships, caring for staff and each other, innovation, managing costs and resources, creating and fostering the organisational culture in the teams”.

The feedback was conveyed in a caring but direct manner. The team leaders had a chance to consider the gaps in their development in relation to their new identity, role and primary task in the organisation. During this session the leaders increased their trust in each other. Members felt a “sense of belonging and togetherness”.

- **Taking of Roles**

For the team leaders in BSS the adopting of new roles (Czander, 1993) was an important part of establishing a new identity and primary task. They made sense of their learning through application. This included the re-negotiation of their boundaries. Boundaries exist in relation to others and find reality when negotiated with others (see Chapter 3).

Changes in the client system were reflected in the team feedback sessions leaders conducted with their teams, the work of the social committee, in project communication and even in the year end function. One of the most significant interventions, however, was the strategy session of November 2008.

The November strategy session was a turning point. The leadership team presented the BSS strategy as a journey, starting with the state of affairs 20 months into the history of the function and ending with the plans for the new quarter.

Not only did the team leaders demonstrate their intention to lead the division during this process but they also started to contain anxiety in the system. They communicated their philosophy about people and their intention to create a much more caring environment: “We do regard the people as our most important asset”. They also communicated the relationship that they intended to create with the front office: “To be strategic partners with our clients”. The primary inadequacies of the division were also acknowledged. The most interesting part of this presentation was that the team leaders owned many of these inadequacies and in essence took back some of their

projections (see section 2.2) of incompetence. “We do not manage relationships well at this point in time”. “We are not doing enough communication and if we are communicating, we are probably communicating the incorrect message or information”.

The session provided further containment by communicating the divisional strategy as well as the key expectations that the leaders held of everyone. These included: “communicating, working smart, managing expectations, meeting deadlines, expanding knowledge and experience, sharing knowledge and experience, assisting their clients, being representatives for Business Support Services, increasing capacity and having fun”.

Michael was “stunned” by the impact of the session. The staff for the first time seemed to be more aligned. Michael described it as “a sense of solidarity”. The staff, for the first time, had gained a sense of the strategic direction of the function and the big picture. But, of greater importance, they were presented with a leadership team who did not only “sing from the same hymn sheet” but also revealed a significant level of vulnerability. At the same time they showed confidence in the function of BSS and clearly demonstrated that they had heard the feedback from the staff and had truly decided to change because of this feedback. The staff felt heard by the team leaders. The leadership team’s willingness to change their ways proved that they were truly committed to their staff. The staff was therefore ready to take responsibility

In retrospect the core changes in the client system were triggered by a re-evaluation of the Business Support Services leadership team’s identity, both in relation to their staff

and in relation to the front office that they were supporting. At the same time they redefined their primary task in the division. This included a wide range of changes including their role, function and place in the system. All these shifts were followed by the development of new abilities. This went beyond the learning of new skills. It was as if the system had to calibrate itself to the new identity and primary task. New ability was created through building new relationships, taking on new attitudes, working on authorisation issues and learning new skills. Beyond all of this the team confronted its own belief system, with its members redefining some of their mental models and becoming conscious of some of their unconscious behaviour.

5.2 CASE B: INFORMATION SECURITY IN AN INTERNATIONAL SPECIALIST BANKING GROUP

Consulting to Information Security started with the Information Security team as the primary client and then shifted to a group wide focus with the Group IT Management Committee as the primary client. Data gathering took place over a period of five months.

The case presented the consultant with a group-as-a-whole scenario. The focus of the consultation was on information security as a collective task of the organisation.

5.2.1 The Consulting Process

In this section the consulting process followed by the consultant is unpacked according to the consulting framework described in section 2.5. The reader is taken

through the consultation from a process perspective. The description of the consultation process is undertaken from the position of participant observer.

(a) Engagement

James, the leader of the “Info Sec” (information security) team, initiated the consulting engagement. He already knew the consultant and wanted the latter to meet with him and his team. When the first meeting with James and the Info Sec team was held, there were some internal problems in the team. Some of the members in the South African half of the team felt that their roles were unclear, and James wanted to clarify expectations. It was agreed to run a role clarification session to address this problem. At this point the consultant was completely oblivious to any other dynamics.

During this initial session the role of the Info Sec Team as a whole was the first point of discussion. Its members redefined their mandate in the organisation. They also discussed every role in the team and James clarified his expectations of each person in the team. Team members stated during this session that they experienced difficulty in “selling” their roles and value proposition to the rest of the organisation and, ultimately, to their internal clients. This particular issue was not explored during this session but was noted by the consultant as a concern.

The consultant held several meetings with James after this session: most of the conversation focussed on internal team issues and his difficulty in managing the South African part of the team remotely. He was also dealing with leadership challenges in the team. One of the team members in South Africa had taken up informal leadership

of the team in the absence of James and was strongly challenging the decisions made and directions given by James.

The consulting focus changed when James raised a new crisis. One of the South African Info Sec team members wanted to leave the team and join the Internal Audit division. The idea was that his skills would provide the capability to Internal Audit to test information vulnerabilities in the system and to provide more in depth information to the board of directors on information security issues. The Info Sec team was “shocked”. In their minds this was part of their work and this kind of change could cause all sorts of problems, not the least being that the board would receive information about vulnerabilities before anybody would have an opportunity to fix them. Some felt that non-executive board members would not understand should such information come to light. This incident raised major questions and widespread confusion about the role of the Information Security Team, which marked the start of a new consulting assignment.

The engagement phase raised many questions in the consultant. At this point it was not entirely clear who the client was. The initial interaction had begun with the Info Sec team but there were much bigger issues on the table. Also making this question difficult was the way that the consultant’s work had been defined in this organisation. There were no real restrictions in terms of where and on which level the consultant could engage the organisation. It was also not clear where the focus of the consultation should fall.

(b) Contracting

This case was made interesting by the fact that there was no clear beginning to the consulting assignment, the primary client altered throughout the consultation and the primary task (see section 2.2) of the consultation changed several times. Contracting in this case was an important part of staying on track.

After the initial meeting and intervention with the Info Sec Team to clarify roles and expectations within the team the real need started to emerge. The conflict with Internal Audit and the confusion about testing of IT vulnerability led to the need to clarify expectations with the business units. The primary task of the consulting assignment at this point was to clarify the role of the Info Sec Team with all stakeholders in the information security arena. The plan was to contract expectations of the team with each of the Business Unit IT heads. The meetings would be facilitated by the consultant. After the meetings it was clear that the business unit IT divisions wanted control over their own information security and that they viewed the Info Sec Team as a policy provider and advisory body, at most.

The matter was discussed at Group IT Manco. The Business Units were concerned about the fact that “the Info Sec team do not know what their role is”. It was decided that Information Security had become a risk in the organisation and that an information security forum needed to be established that should be fully authorised to deal with matters of Information Security on a group wide level. The primary task of the consulting assignment now shifted again. The new task was to deal with splits in

the organisation with regards to information security through the establishment of a functional information security forum. The primary client was now Group IT Manco.

The plan was to establish the Information Security Forum by means of a two day dialogue where all relevant parties would be present. The plan for the intervention was to map the information security area in terms of the different roleplayers involved. People would then be asked to physically divide themselves into those groups and to find a private working space. Each group would need to define its own primary task, key responsibilities and boundaries in relation to information security in the organisation. Once they had completed this they would be instructed to do so for each of the other groups. The contracting in terms of this task was undertaken with the Group IT Manco.

(c) Analysing

Analysing occurred on different levels in this consulting assignment. The consultant used himself as an instrument (see 2.2) from the very first interactions with James and the Info Sec Team. The consultant's knowledge of the organisation, its culture and the way it is structured proved to be very valuable in this consulting assignment.

There was no specific diagnostic intervention in this case. Data was gathered as and when interactions with the client system occurred. The team session with the Info Sec Team and the discussions with the Business Unit IT Heads both supplied much data for diagnosis. The two day process that took place at the end of the assignment also provided plenty of data, and it was possible to work with the data in the "here and

now”. All data was analysed from a systems psychodynamic perspective; working hypotheses were formed and these hypotheses were either developed further or discarded and replaced by new ones.

(d) Intervening

In this case it was very clear how blurred the boundaries between engaging, contracting, diagnosing and intervening can become. Any one of these steps might also include any one of the others. Three major interventions were carried out in this process. The first was the team session with the Info Sec team. This intervention was described as part of the engagement section. The reason for this is that in retrospect, this intervention paved the way to working with Information Security as a group wide phenomenon. It was also the first opportunity to gather information. The second intervention was the facilitated discussions with the Business Unit IT Heads about the role and primary task of the Info Sec Team. This intervention once again turned out to be more of a diagnostic intervention than anything else. The third major intervention was the two day Information Security Workshop. This intervention served as a “here and now” contracting session between all the major role players in the information security space.

(e) Disengaging

The consulting contract altered after the establishment of the new Information Security Forum. Regular meetings with the Group IT Manco were still required, but

time was needed to establish the new agreed boundaries and way of working. This consulting relationship was later handed to a new consultant.

5.2.2 The Consultation

The consultation started with the Information Security Team (Info Sec Team), as mentioned earlier. It was apparent to the consultant that the perceived primary task, role and identity of the team (inline as in Miller, 1985) were different from the view of the business units (outline as in Miller, 1985). The Info Sec Team described its primary task (Rice, 1963) as follows: “To protect the organisation’s information”. The Business Unit IT divisions viewed this task as their responsibility. They were not interested in the value proposition of the Info Sec consultants, nor were they supportive of the role of the Group Information Security Officer (GISO). They said that Group IT and the GISO were “telling them what to do”. Something that, in this organisation, very rarely happened, as already explained in 4.4.1. The first session with the Info Sec team, however, did not focus on these issues. Its members were more concerned about internal role differentiation, as discussed earlier.

James visited the business units when conflict with Internal Audit erupted. He suspected that the role (see section 3.1.2) and task (see section 3.1.3) of the Info Sec team was not clear to others in the organisation; the business units seemed a good place to start. The consultant was asked to facilitate discussions with each IT head in the different business units. James engaged each of them separately to evaluate their understanding of the role and primary task of the Info Sec team. Through these interactions James realised that there was serious confusion about the primary task of

his team in the organisation. He tried to understand the business unit expectation of the Info Sec team. It seemed as if they (the business units) wanted autonomy for all information security related aspects of their businesses. They felt that James and the Info Sec Team could not take responsibility for “the security of their information” and that they were ultimately responsible. They were happy with the fact that Internal Audit could potentially produce incriminating reports on the state of their information security and claimed that they would welcome feedback that could help them to improve their own security. They still believed that James should write policy but they would implement the policies and translate it into the right set of procedures. Some were pleased that the Info Sec team had consultants that could help them with this “translation aspect” but others felt that they possessed the correct expertise in the business unit to do so. They also stated that they would “appoint their own experts to do the job if needed”. It was clear that the Info Sec team, in many instances, was not welcome. James could not understand why the Business Units reacted in this way. At this point the following interpretation was formed by the consultant:

Consultant Interpretation A: *There is misalignment between the Info Sec team and the rest of the organisation in terms of the identity, role and task of the Info Sec team. The Info Sec team is de-authorised by the Business Units to perform its primary task.*

This interpretation was based on the evidence provided by the different IT heads and the members of the Info Sec team, which pointed towards fundamental discrepancies in the understanding of the role and task of the information security team. But the consultant’s intuition was that there was more to the consultation than met the eye.

The consultant had many questions on his mind: Why are the Business Unit IT heads so antagonistic? What is really going on? Is this only about the Info Sec Team?

A better understanding of Group IT might be useful at this point. Group IT was mandated to look after IT from a group perspective. This mandate originated directly from the CEO. The head of Group IT will be referred to as “Marc”, as mentioned. Marc, it seems, did not sufficiently negotiate authority boundaries for Group IT with the Business Units. When the Group IT roles were appointed none of the members were selected from any of the Business Units. All the appointments were recruited out of central areas in the organisation and most of them out of Central IT. The business unit IT heads took offence at this and questioned why none of them had been selected or involved in selecting people for the Group IT roles. Some members of the IT divisions in the business units raised their disapproval of Marc and the members of Group IT. “This kind of autocratic, unilateral decision making is culturally not accepted in this organisation”. Marc seemed to be the target of projections. All the behaviour that Marc was blamed for also manifested itself among the business unit IT heads. They were not open to this possibility at this point in the consultation. They perceived Marc as a problem and were unsure as to what they should do about it. Marc, in the minds of the business unit IT heads, exercised much organisational power and they did not confront him directly. This was apparent in the language and behaviour around and about Marc. From several conversations the consultant concluded that the business unit IT heads perceived their autonomy to be under threat. The organisational model was one where business units were allowed to make their own decisions (see 4.3.1). The business units therefore began to question if they had enough control over their own IT. The business unit IT heads did not openly discuss

their concerns with Marc, which made matters worse. The unconscious organisation responded with a host of defences (see section 2.2), attacks and anti task behaviour (Stapley, 2006).

The IT community found itself in a continuous cycle of basic assumption groups ranging from fight/flight (Bion, 1961) behaviour to me-ness (Lawrence, 2000) and dependency (Bion, 1961). Fighting was played out as philosophical and technical debates that never reached any conclusion. Flight was manifested in the way that meetings were attended, or rather, not attended. Me-ness was the most prominent, with the business units simply focusing on their own IT domain with little regard for group wide IT issues. The monthly Group IT Manco meetings provided much evidence of the unconscious dynamics in IT. The meetings were notoriously unproductive. Anti-task behaviour would consume most of the energy of the forum. This would include poor attendance, coming late, long seemingly pointless debates and a lack of participation by some. Members would make decisions yet later deny that they had ever supported them. This meeting was chaired by Marc. The consultant believed at this point that group IT and Marc in particular were being de-authorised by the business unit IT heads. The word “boycott” was used by the consultant. The reasons for the boycott were not entirely clear. There seemed to be envy towards the Group IT members and there seemed to be fear of being dominated by Marc and Group IT.

James and the Info Sec Team were viewed as representative of, or even part of, Group IT. This boundary confusion (see section 3.2) occurred because the primary task of James and his team had been authorised by Group IT. The Business Units viewed the

Info Sec Team as “The Information Security Police”. This phrase helped the consultant to understand more about how the business unit IT leaders perceived Group IT and the Info Sec Team. They seemed to believe that they were being watched, called to task, and even parented by these central functions. Their response to this perceived threat was rebellious, but in a passive aggressive way. They feared Marc on a political level and therefore would not dare to confront him openly. They apparently held onto the fantasy that Marc was dangerous and that he could not be confronted. The consultant was nevertheless of the opinion that Marc was approachable and that he would be willing to listen to the concerns of the business unit IT leaders.

The consultant believed that James and his team, seen as representative of Group IT and the threat that it posed to business unit autonomy, were scapegoated. This was apparent from the way that James and his team were blamed for everything that went wrong in the information security world, despite continuous anti-task behaviour and reluctance from the business units to cooperate. At this point the behaviour of the business units seemed to represent more than mere defences against anxiety. It was as if the info sec team was under attack. It seemed highly probable to the consultant that envy was in operation. The members of business unit IT could very well have been envious towards the members of Group IT. None of the former had been chosen or even considered for these positions and they were very unhappy about this. They stated that these positions should have been offered to them and they seemed to attribute status to these positions: status, that to the consultant, seemed slightly disconnected from reality. Their behaviour towards the Info Sec team appeared to be deliberately aggressive (see section 2.2).

It was not possible for the consultant to be entirely sure about the motives and drives of the IT members in the business units. It was apparent that they felt threatened, but it also seemed highly probable that they were envious. It is feasible that both these realities were present simultaneously.

James was unaware of the unconscious dynamics at play and took personal strain during the whole process. In his mind there was something wrong with him or his team. He identified with all the “bad stuff” that had been placed onto him by the business unit IT leaders. He started to lose confidence and was reluctant to confront the business unit IT leaders. This self doubt reinforced the belief among business unit members that Group IT and the Info Sec team were incompetent. The consultant realised that James was carrying the incompetence that was present in the whole system in terms of managing information security. The Info Sec team was a soft target. James posed the lowest personal threat to business unit members on a political level, compared to other members of Group IT. This was partly the case because the rest of Group IT also believed that James was ineffective, which created conflict between James and Marc. This left James isolated and vulnerable. At this point the consultant held onto the following interpretations:

Consultant Interpretation B: *James and the Info Sec team are carrying the incompetence of the organisation as a whole in terms of managing information security in the group.*

Consultant Interpretation C: *The Info Sec Team is viewed as part of Marc and Group IT. James and his team are the target of envious attack (Stein, 2000) from the business unit IT community. The attack takes the form of de-authorisation and anti task behaviour, rendering the Info Sec Team helpless and ineffective.*

More fighting (Bion, 1961) behaviour played out in resistance to the work of the Info Sec team. This included confrontations about policies and anger about vulnerability testing. In one instance the Info Sec Team ran vulnerability tests (IT tests which are used to measure information security threats) without the consent of the business units. The tests revealed several issues but the business unit IT heads were furious. They believed that James and his team were overstepping their boundaries. More anti task behaviour played out in IT leaders of business units not showing up for important meetings regarding information security. This included poor attendance of the Information Security Forum, which had been established to create a dialogue space for information security issues. The consultant became aware of how anxious people were about information security or the lack thereof in the group. Some applied strategies to deal with the anxiety:

In many cases me-ness (Lawrence, 2000) on a divisional level was characterised by an inability to examine group information security issues. It was as if each division only cared about its own security, despite the fact that a silo approach to information security was not possible (according to James). In other situations the business units went into complete dependency (Bion, 1961). All of this seemed to alleviate the psychological pressure of the situation but it did not alter anything in reality. In one meeting the business units demanded a group information security strategy. James

wanted to co-develop the strategy but he was labelled as incompetent because he did not have a readymade strategy available. The situation became untenable and it seemed as if the organisation was at risk because there was no clear information security strategy. The team that was supposed to look after information security seemed to be rendered ineffective and helpless while hard evidence proved that several real information threats were not accounted for in the group.

The issue came under discussion at the Group IT Manco meeting. It was decided that all parties involved in the information security world would meet for two full days to “re-invent information security” in the organisation. James and his team members met with the consultant. They prepared their own view of their role and tasks in the organisation and came up with a draft strategy for information security. It was agreed that none of this would be produced in the workshop unless requested by the other members present.

A week before the workshop the business units asked for it to be cancelled. The stated reason was that it was too close to the “Group IT Manco Strategy Session” and that the issue could be resolved at that meeting. The said meeting is an annual one that runs over two to three days. It provides the opportunity for members who usually meet by means of video conference from different parts of the world to assemble face to face and discuss key IT issues that might not be resolved during the monthly meeting. At face value the request sounded logical, but the consultant believed that, psychodynamically, this behaviour was anti-task (Stapley, 2006) behaviour from the business units. Without a dedicated meeting about information security in the group, the issues in the information security space could not be solved and the organisation

would be in a vulnerable position. The consultant met with the Group IT Manco. Members of Group IT were present but Marc was not present (he needed to attend another executive meeting); members from the business units openly expressed their concerns about Marc leading the information security workshop. They wanted the session to be facilitated and Marc to take part as a member of the group (normally Marc would facilitate the conversations between the different parties, as was also done at the Group IT Manco meeting; this was his style of leadership). This offered further evidence that Marc and Group IT were perceived as a threat to the Business Units and that the latter wanted a meeting on neutral ground. It was agreed that the consultant would facilitate the workshop. A day before the workshop Marc announced that something unforeseen had come up and that he would be unable to attend the workshop. He asked that the meeting should continue without him. This was interesting. It appeared as if the organisation had worked collectively to remove him from the system (see section 2.2). The members of the business unit IT divisions were apparently ready to talk openly this time. Many of them spoke to the consultant before the session, expressing their expectations and needs for it to be a success. To the consultant this seemed like further evidence that Marc was carrying or representing the part of the system that was autocratic, did not listen and could not be reasoned with. With him not present they suddenly seemed more open to change.

- **The Group Information Security Workshop**

The primary task (Rice, 1963) of the workshop was to establish a new Group Information Security Forum. This forum would be authorised (Obholzer & Roberts,

1994) to deal with all information security issues in the organisation and would be chaired by James.

The workshop was attended by representatives from each Business Unit IT division, Central IT, Group IT, Internal Audit, Operational Risk, the Technical Architecture Board and the Info Sec team. Everyone at the workshop agreed that the above mentioned seven groups of people all had a stake in the information security arena and that they were all represented sufficiently at the session.

The consultant then proceeded with the “role clarification session” as planned. Each group had to define its own roles, primary task and key responsibilities, the roles of others and their expectations of others. All this was done in relation to the primary task of information security that had been dialogued about and agreed before the event. Some groups were unable to define the roles of others while others provided very strong conceptualisations of where everyone fitted into the information security space. All of the views were written on a flip chart; then the groups came together and a dialogue began. The aim of this institutional event was to elicit the organisation in the mind (Armstrong, 2004) of the seven different groupings present at the workshop.

Two very distinct primary tasks emerged for the Info Sec team and the business units. The primary task for the Info Sec team was “oversight and promotion of information security within the group”. They were not authorised to execute tasks on behalf of the business units and they were not responsible for implementation or “product selection”. The business units on the other hand were now tasked to “ensure that the group’s environment is secure”. This was a fundamental shift in primary task (see

section 2.2). There were many implications. Firstly, James and his team were no longer responsible for information security in the group. The business units now carried the responsibility. The consultant believed that this shift in responsibility provided immense psychological relief to the business units. On an unconscious level they won the conflict against Group IT and regained their autonomy in this particular arena. This conclusion was based on the change in attitude and style of conversation on the side of the business unit IT people. The second implication was that business units needed to look at information security on a more holistic group level. It was no longer acceptable only to focus on one's own business unit area (me-ness). This seemed a small price to pay; in return they exercised full control over their IT security environment. It was interesting how this shift in primary task immediately influenced the behaviour of the Business Unit IT heads in the workshop. They started to talk about their own anti-task behaviour (Stapley, 2006) and negotiated new terms with each other. New commitments were made to attend important meetings, hold each other accountable and to take responsibility for the agreed roles they were about to take up.

The environment also changed for the Info Sec Team. They would still set the policy and consult to the business. What altered was their identity (see section 3.1.1) in the minds of the business units. Before the session they were perceived as Group IT. With this identity arrived all the dynamics related to the relationship between Group IT and the business units. After the session the business units saw the identity of the Info Sec team as separate from Group IT.

After all these role clarifications it was evident that the Information Security Forum was not an entity on its own but only served as a dialogue and decision-making space for all the role players. The forum would consist of representatives from each of the seven groupings mentioned earlier as well as each of the business units. All Information Security matters would be discussed in the forum, the focus of which would be group wide. The forum was now authorised and the different parties on the forum had now clearly negotiated their boundaries (see section 3.2). For the first time it seemed like the group was moving toward alignment about information security.

5.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this Chapter the first level of research findings was presented. The findings related to each case study were described. The findings were discussed in an integrated and chronological fashion using the systems psychodynamic perspective.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS LEVEL TWO

In this Chapter the data and interpretations presented in Chapter 5 are sorted into collections and themes. Working hypotheses are formed within each of the themes. This coding process was described in Chapter 4. This entire process is approached from the position of the *discourse researcher*. The process of creating themes and collections and writing hypotheses is employed to integrate the findings of the research. The aim of the process was to finally produce two primary research hypotheses in order to answer the research questions that were posed in Chapter 1.

6.1 CASE A: LEADERSHIP IN BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES

Case A presented the researcher with three primary collections. The themes in Collections 1, 2 and 3 were extracted by analysing the case study data. The data was interpreted in relation to the theory in Chapters 2 and 3. The formulation of the themes reflects the thinking framework of the researcher. Verbatim words and phrases used by the client system appear in parenthesis.

Collection 1: Boundary Management

Theme 1: The Interaction between Authority, Capability, Identity, Role and Task

Theme 2: Differentiation and Boundaries

Theme 3: Integration and Boundaries

Theme 4: Misalignment and Disintegration

Theme 5: The Adverse Effects of Boundary Problem

Collection 2: The Role and Tasks of the Consultant

Theme 1: Identification of Boundary Issues

Theme 2: Working with Integration

Theme 3: Working with Differentiation

Theme 4: Asking Questions

Theme 5: Defining Hypotheses

Theme 6: Making Decisions

Theme 7: Taking Action

Collection 3: The Consulting Process

Theme 1: Engaging

Theme 2: Contracting

Theme 3: Analysing

Theme 4: Intervening

Theme 5: Disengaging

6.1.1 Themes and Hypotheses Related to Boundary Management

The themes presented here are directly related to the systems psychodynamic view of boundary management as explained in section 3.1. Working hypotheses were

formulated for each of the themes (Haslebo & Nielsen, 2000). The hypotheses are woven into the themes instead of being extracted after the facts have been presented. This practice illustrates the “work as you go” (see section 2.2) nature of working hypotheses.

Theme 1: The Interaction between Authority, Ability, Identity, Role and Task

In this case, the front office exercises more authority (see section 2.2) than the back office functions. This authority boundary was not completely conscious. The construction of this boundary rested on two basic intergroup dynamics: Firstly, the front office consisted of the “deal makers”. They were in the “cold face of the client” every day, and for that reason the business revolved around them (Lamertz, 2006). Deal making (as explained in 4.3.1) is highly valued in this organisation, much more so than positional authority. Secondly, the role of Financial Management Services (FMS) was defined as “service providers” to the front. This label carried many conscious and unconscious messages about the authority relationship between the two areas. These two factors differentiated FMS and the Front Office from each other (section 3.2.1). The Front Office was authorised to demand service from FMS, to voice opinions openly and even aggressively, and to decide about the direction and strategy of the business. FMS on the other hand was not authorised to demand anything; it had “less of a voice” in the organisation and its members were not consulted or included in strategic discussions.

The transformation of FMS into Business Support Services (BSS) began with a conscious shift in primary task. FMS was no longer able to provide an adequate

service to the front office. Its primary task of generating income through service provision to a range of clients, including other financial institutions, was shifted to providing only support to the securities division of which FMS was a part. This shift in primary task resulted in immediate identity implications. The former identity was constructed around its income generating capacity, a profitable, client facing business in its own right. The team's new identity was that of "back office", an internal support function. The shift in identity was apparent in the way that the relationship between the newly named BSS and the Front Office altered. When the team was called FMS the Front Office was regarded as a client. The relationship had been one of "client and service provider". With the new name, primary task and identity this relationship was restated as a "partnership". The meaning of this word in the given organisational context is significant, as explained in Chapter 5. The new identity of "partner" with the front office implied a much greater level of self authorisation than previously.

The redefinition of the identity of the back office modified the way its staff took up their role in the division. The shift in identity and role was a form of self authorisation that made it possible for the back office to relate differently to the front office. The back office now "had a voice" and could engage the front office in a more proactive way.

Three working hypotheses emerge at this point:

Working Hypothesis 1: *A Change in identity will lead to a change in role and vice versa (see section 3.3).*

Working Hypothesis 2: *A redefinition of identity and role leads to a shift in authorisation (see section 3.3).*

Working Hypothesis 3: *A shift in primary task may lead to a shift in identity (see section 3.3).*

The shift that BSS underwent in terms of role, primary task and identity also had implications on a capability level. BSS started to ask hard questions about its own ability to deliver adequate support to the front office. This led to a series of structural changes in the back office. Individual roles were altered, new people were employed and those who did not fit the new model had to leave. During this process the members of the leadership team started to ask questions about their own role as leaders. They realised that their “drive performance at all costs” approach was not appropriate any longer. This led to a shift in their own identity, from “managers” to “leaders”. This identity shift again brought a new set of tasks and roles to the leadership team. They were also forced into developing new skills in order to occupy their new roles. When the team leaders authorised themselves and started to play their new roles they also started to obtain authorisation from their staff and the front office.

Working Hypothesis 4: *A shift in role, primary task and identity may lead to shifts in ability (see 3.3).*

Theme 2: Differentiation and Boundaries

In this case study there was a boundary between BSS and the front office which was clearly defined along the lines of identity, role and task (see Chapter 3). The front office's identity was built firmly on the role of its staff as client facing, money generating employees of a bank. The primary task (Rice, 1963) of this role is to generate income and to service clients. All the tasks related to this role revolved around clients. BSS on the other hand had an identity that was erected on its role as back office, technical, support staff. The primary task of this role is to support the front office in serving the client and generating income. All the tasks related to this role revolved around the front office.

On a secondary level, authority and ability factors also differentiated (see 3.1.4 and 3.1.5) BSS from the front office. The idea that the latter revolved around clients and deals, and BSS revolved around the front office, created a difference in authority between the two areas (Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips, 2006). The difference in primary tasks also produced a difference in capability as the two areas needed two very different skill sets to perform the tasks they were required to. All these factors differentiated (see 3.2.1) BSS from the front office.

Also evident was the boundary between the "old" people and the "new" ones. This boundary manifested itself as a split between these two groups. There were no normative tasks (Elfer, 2007) and role differentiations between these two groups. These groups occupied emotional roles (Gemmill & Kraus, 1988), rather than formal work roles. Identity was a strong differentiator, however (see 3.1.1). The "old" people

identified themselves as “good organisational citizens” and “culture fits”. The “new” people identified themselves as “progressive”, “cutting edge” and “innovative”. Along the lines of these identities unstated roles and tasks (see 3.1.2 and 3.1.3) also emerged. The “old” people took the role of guardians of the organisation’s culture, while the “new” ones adopted the role of change agents and innovators. On a task level the “old” people continuously reminded the “new” ones when they were “counter cultural”, while the latter made work of pointing out inefficiencies and coming up with new ideas.

Ability and authority also played a role in differentiating (see 3.1.4 and 3.1.5) the two groups. The primary ability of the “old” people was related to their organisational knowledge, while the primary capacity of the new people was that of technical skill. Both sides were authorised to play these roles. The organisation is highly focused on its culture and therefore authorises those who have been around for a long time to educate others about this culture. The “new” people were also authorised by management to introduce new ideas and help the business improve. The boundary between the two groups was forged along the lines of these identities, roles and tasks; supported by their separate abilities and authority (see Chapter 3).

These examples seem to explain the way that teams and organisations differentiate themselves from others.

Working Hypothesis 5: *Differences in identity, role, task, authority and ability create differentiation and boundaries between different organisations, or organisational sub-systems (see 3.3).*

Theme 3: Integration and Boundaries

The formation of the BSS leadership team, in Case Study One, offers a clear example of integration (see 3.2.1) and boundary formation along the lines of identity, role and task (see Chapter 3). The team identity was shaped around the concept of leadership and team. The primary task of the team was to “lead” BSS and they differentiated this task from “managing”. They also focused on leadership as a collective task which brought the idea of “teamwork” into their identity as leaders. They refocused their collective energy on tasks that were related to leadership activities, rather than managerial activities. When they proceeded to take up their leadership role the team had a sense of shared meaning on all these issues while in the broader organisation its members became more and more differentiated as a leadership team.

On a secondary level they authorised themselves differently in order to take up their roles as leaders and realized that they also needed to build new skills and knowledge in order to play these roles effectively. During their team performance development review session they were clearly focusing on new skills and abilities as a result of their shift in role and task.

The factor which made a team out of this group of leaders was their shared idea of a primary task, role and identity (Standifer & Bluedorn, 2006). They also authorised themselves and each other to take up their roles. This was apparent from the way that they moved into their roles after their offsite team session (see 5.1) and also in the interactions during the feedback session (see 5.1). On the most fundamental level a

shared belief system (Schein, 2004) began to evolve about who they were as a team and what it was that they wanted to accomplish (see 5.1).

In this case a further factor was also the formation of BSS after the restructuring of FMS. The function needed to redefine its own identity, primary task and role in the division. BSS created a new shared identity pivoting on its function as “back office support”. Its members let go of the idea of being an income generating unit that also served clients outside of the bank. Their primary task was technical support to the front office and they began to play this role accordingly (Czander, 1993). The team leaders in BSS began to initiate alignment among people regarding this new identity, role and task (Shumate & Fulk, 2004). They focused a good deal on the technical ability of staff to provide support, which led to numerous structural changes, upskilling of personnel and the appointment of new members. All of these efforts started to create a shared idea in the minds of members of BSS in terms of who they were, and what it was that they should be doing in relation to the rest of the organisation. These examples contribute to our understanding of integration of teams and organisations (see 3.2.1).

Working Hypothesis 6: *A Shared identity, role and task, supported by adequate authorisation and corresponding capabilities, provide a sense of connection to such a team or organisation.*

The term *connection* in this hypothesis refers to the sense that individuals have of being part of something when they possess a shared meaning system (Schein, 2004); also see 3.2.1.

Theme 4: Misalignment and Fragmentation

In this case study there was a split between the back office and the front office. There was also a split between the BSS team leaders and their staff. A third split existed between the old and new people in BSS. (See 5.1.)

All these splits were characterised by misalignment of the inline and outline boundaries (Miller 1985) of the different areas along the lines described: capability, authority, identity, role and task.

These splits led to fragmentation (see 3.2.1) of the organisation. In each of these cases communication suffered, anti task behaviour developed and conflict was prevalent. Ultimately, the system became more and more dysfunctional and unable to deliver on its primary task.

Working Hypothesis 7: *Misalignment between different parts of an organisation in terms of capability, authority, identity, role and task can lead to splits, ineffective communication and fighting.*

This hypothesis is focused on the conceptualisation that different parts of an organisation develop of themselves and of each other (the organisation in the mind) (Stapely, 1996). In boundary terms this would refer to the difference between the inline and outline of any organisational sub-system (Miller, 1985). This case presented the inlines of the back office (how they viewed themselves) in relation to the outlines of the front office (how the latter viewed them) and the inlines of the BSS

leadership (how the leaders viewed themselves) in relation to the outlines of their staff (how their staff viewed them).

The split between BSS (back office) and the front office appeared to be the result of misalignment between the outline that the front office had of BSS and the inline of BSS itself (Miller,1985). On an identity level members of BSS viewed themselves as “partners” to the front office, but the latter viewed BSS as “internal service providers”, providing support to the Front Office and responding to its decisions and needs. They also believed that the back office did not possess the ability to understand their business strategically and for that reason needed to be “order takers” rather than strategists. BSS agreed that they were to support the Front Office but not in the same reactive way that the Front Office expected. They wanted to influence the decision-making and strategic direction of the Front Office. They believed that they were able to contribute strategically by applying IT strategy to business thinking. It is clear that the role that the Front Office wanted BSS to play was not the role that they wanted to play. This role conflict and mismatch of identity and task led to a breakdown in relationship between the Front Office and BSS. The Front Office de-authorised any kind of strategic interactions with BSS and did not even invite its staff to important strategic meetings. The evidence was the mere fact that BSS representatives were rarely, if ever, invited to strategy sessions that had direct impact on the IT of the business. They were usually informed about decisions after these meetings.

The same mismatch was present between the BSS leaders and their staff. Leaders in the mind of the staff were supposed to provide “direction, support, and protection” from the Front Office who seemed to be unforgiving in their expectations. The team

leaders of BSS in their own minds were “task masters” who needed to “drive delivery and execution”. Once again a conflict of role, identity and task lead to a breakdown in relationship between the team leaders and their staff.

These examples provide proof of how discrepancies within the “organisation in the mind”, or more specifically inlines and outlines between different parts of an organisation, can lead to a splitting. When this occurs, conflict and the inability to collaborate start to harm the organisation.

Theme 5: The Adverse Effects of Boundary Problems

In this case there was stress and conflict in the Securities Division over delivery and performance. Much anxiety was at the root of all these symptoms. The anxiety led to unconscious intergroup dynamics such as splitting, projections, scapegoating, fighting and fleeing (see section 2.2). The high expectations of the front office created more stress and pressure for the back office. This led to a very task driven approach by the BSS leadership that created even more stress and anxiety among the BSS staff. The back office team leaders were not very effective at managing the boundaries of the division. This led to an inability to create a firm enough holding environment or to contain the difficult emotions of their employees (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbeaert, 2008). They were also not very good people managers. Their staff described the working environment as “unsupportive and not caring”.

Providing a solid holding environment was perceived as a primary leadership task after the BSS team leader workshop. At the November 2007 strategic session these

leaders started taking back some of their projections by owning some of their own incompetence as leaders, by providing vision and direction and by presenting themselves as an aligned leadership team. They actively began to manage the boundaries between them and their teams and also between them and the Front Office. This was carried out by clearly stating, defining and negotiating their roles with both parties. The above mentioned strategic session afforded a clear example. During this session the leaders made their intentions and new primary task clear to their staff (see 5.1). The same was done in a host of meetings and interactions with the front office.

Working Hypothesis 8: *When organisational boundaries are badly managed stress and conflict will increase and the organisation may start to “dis-integrate”. The negotiation of boundaries is a way to create a functional organisation.*

6.1.2 Themes Related to the Role of the Consultant

The themes presented here are directly related to boundary management consulting (see section 3.3); more specifically the role of the consultant.

Theme 1: Identification of Boundary Issues

In this case several boundary issues were identified by the consultant (see 3.3). There was a split between BSS and the front office. The BSS leadership team had not sufficiently negotiated its identity, role and task boundaries with the Front Office. There was a clear discrepancy between the inline and outline of BSS when it came to the front office. There was a further divide between the BSS leadership team and their

staff. The BSS leadership team had not sufficiently managed the boundaries between it and its staff. There was a clear discrepancy between the inline and outline of the BSS leadership team as regards their staff. There was a further split between the “old” and “new” people in BSS. The two groups both held the paranoid schizoid position towards each other and were unconscious of the boundaries that divided them. The BSS leadership team did not feel like a team to its members since they had not sufficiently negotiated a shared sense of identity, role and task boundary with each other. There was misalignment between the stated identity, role and task of BSS and the way it was authorised in the organisation. Its staff needed to negotiate their authority in the organisation. Misalignment was also evident between the stated identity, role and task of the BSS leadership team and their capabilities. They needed to enhance their leadership abilities in order to deliver on their primary task as leaders.

These issues were identified by analysing the different organisational sub-systems and the interrelationships between these groups. The framework and principles described in Chapters 2 and 3 were applied to diagnose the system and define the boundary issues.

Theme 2: Working with Integration

In this case study the consultant worked on the internal integration (see 3.2.1) of BSS as an organisational function by helping the function to develop shared meaning (Schein, 2004) in terms of its own identity, role and task. The staff were also supported in re-negotiating their authority in the organisation. The BSS leadership

team members also developed shared meaning in terms of their leadership identity, role and task. They also worked on aligning their abilities to these newly stated aspects. Alignment of the inline and outline discrepancies between BSS and the front office, and also between the BSS leadership team and its staff, also helped the organisation to integrate itself more effectively (see 3.3).

Theme 3: Working with Differentiation

The consultant in this case worked with specific parts of the organisation to clarify their own identities, roles and tasks. This process assisted them to clearly differentiate (see 3.2.1) themselves from other parts of the organisation. The BSS leadership differentiated themselves more clearly as a leadership team through understanding their identity, role and task as being different from that of the front office and also as different from their managerial responsibilities. FMS also differentiated itself from the front office when it changed its primary task, role and identity to BSS. Helping the client system to negotiate its boundaries (see 3.2) is part of dealing with differentiation.

6.1.3 Themes Related to Tasks of the Consultant

In this consulting stance the consultant is ultimately the instrument of analysis. The themes identified provide information about some of the key consulting tasks (see 2.4).

Theme 1: Questioning

In this case questioning emerged as a theme in terms of the consultant's approach. A series of questions was asked by the consultant as the consultation unfolded. Four types of questions could be identified.

- **Questions about the primary task of the consulting assignment:**

This type of inquiry included questions like: "What is the primary task of the consulting assignment? What should be done here? What is it that this system ultimately wants to accomplish?"

- **Questions about the scope of the consultation:**

This line of inquiry included questions such as: "Which parts of the system are at play? Who is and isn't the client? Where should the work be done?"

- **Questions about general systems psychodynamics:**

This type of query included such questions as: "What is causing anxiety in the system? What is the organisation doing in order to deal with anxiety? Which defenses are at play? Which assumption groups are present? What unconscious dynamics are at play?"

- **Questions about boundary management:**

This type of inquiry encompassed questions such as: "Who is and isn't part of teams? Who is called what and what does it mean? Who does what? Who is in charge of what? Who can do what? How differentiated or integrated are different sub-systems?"

Are there any splits in the system? Are there any serious discrepancies between the inlines and outlines of different areas? Are there any parts of the organisation that need to negotiate their boundaries with any other part of the organisation? Do people in the same team or division have a shared sense of their boundaries?"

Theme 2: Developing Hypotheses

In this case study interpretations of what was going on were offered by the consultant. These were and are interrelated with and build on each other, according focus to the consultant's efforts. Each interpretation was created using the information that was available at a specific moment in time. The data was analysed according to systems psychodynamic theory. Each interpretation was tested by gathering further information. The interpretations were then changed, discarded or expanded. The following one serves as an example:

There is no shared idea of identity, role and primary task between the leaders in BSS, leading to misalignment with the front office and a perceived absence of leadership among their staff.

In section 2.2 the concept of working with open ended hypotheses was described. The consultant in this case was creating his own concepts of the dynamics at play and built on these concepts as the consultation progressed.

Theme 3: Making decisions

Several decisions were made during this consulting assignment. These included choices about where to start, how to gather information, identifying the real issues, who to include or not to include in discussions, what the data really meant, which interventions to use, etcetera.

Theme 4: Taking action

During several instances in this case study the consultant took action. These included conducting the climate survey, providing feedback to the leadership team, facilitating the leadership offsite workshop, facilitating the leadership feedback session, and consulting to the team and individuals on various issues.

6.1.4 Themes Related to the Consulting Process

The consulting process steps used to describe the consultation in this case were discussed in Chapter 2. The consulting process for this case was described in Chapter 5. The key themes here correspond to the consulting process followed:

Theme 1: Engaging

Theme 2: Contracting (and planning)

Theme 3: Analysing

Theme 4: Intervening

Theme 5: Disengaging

6.1.5 Working Hypotheses

In this section two sets of working hypotheses are considered. These are developed from the themes and hypotheses already presented in section 6.1. These hypotheses and themes are now viewed in relation to each other and distilled into a deeper layer of meaning (see 4.3.6). The first set of hypotheses is focused on boundary management as a task of the organisation while the second set concentrates on boundary management consulting as a task of the consultant.

(a) Working Hypotheses about Boundary Management

In this case eight working hypotheses about boundary management emerged:

Working Hypothesis 1: A Change in identity will lead to a change in role and vice versa.

Working Hypothesis 2: A redefinition of identity and role leads to a shift in authorisation.

Working Hypothesis 3: A shift in primary task may lead to a shift in identity.

Working Hypothesis 4: A shift in role, primary task and identity may lead to shifts in capability.

Working Hypothesis 5: Differences in identity, role, task, authority and capability create differentiation and boundaries between different organisations, or organisational sub-systems.

Working Hypothesis 6: A Shared identity, role and task, supported by adequate authorisation and corresponding capabilities, provide a sense of connection with such a team or organisation.

Working Hypothesis 7: Misalignment between different parts of an organisation in terms of capability, authority, identity, role and task can lead to splits, communication issues and fighting.

Working Hypothesis 8: When organisational boundaries are badly managed stress and conflict will increase and the organisation may become fragmented. The negotiation of boundaries is a way to create a functional organisation.

When these hypotheses are viewed in relation to each other they can be distilled into five key hypotheses. Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 are combined here to form the new hypothesis 1a. Hypotheses 5, 6, 7, and 8 are slightly adjusted to become hypotheses 2a, 3a, 4a and 5a (“a” Refers to Case A as defined in Chapter 4):

Working Hypothesis 1a: Capability, authority, identity, role and task are interrelated constructs. A shift in any of these constructs may result in a shift in one of the others.

Working Hypothesis 2a: Differences in identity, role, task, authority and capability create differentiation and boundaries between different organisations, or organisational sub-systems.

Working Hypothesis 3a: Shared identity, role and task, supported by adequate authorisation and corresponding capabilities, provide a sense of togetherness or connection to such a team or organisation.

Working Hypothesis 4a: Misalignment between different parts of an organisation in terms of capability, authority, identity, role and task can lead to splits, ineffective communication and fighting.

Working Hypothesis 5a: Boundary management helps to control stress and conflict in the organisation, leading to a more functional, well integrated organisation.

(b) Working Hypotheses about Boundary Management Consulting

In this case study three hypotheses about boundary management consulting emerged:

Research Hypothesis 1a: The role of the consultant in boundary management consulting is to (a) Help the organisation to become conscious of its own boundary management issues. (b) Help the organisation to integrate internally. (c) Help the organisation to differentiate sufficiently

Research Hypothesis 2a: The consulting tasks related to this role include: (a) questioning, (b) creating hypotheses, (c) decision making and (d) taking action.

Research Hypothesis 3a: The consulting process in boundary management work is a cycle of (a) engaging, (b) contracting, (c) diagnosing, (d) intervening and (e) disengaging.

6.2 CASE B: INFORMATION SECURITY IN A MULTINATIONAL SPECIALIST BANKING GROUP

Case B presented the researcher with three primary collections. The themes under Collections 1, 2 and 3 were extracted by analysing the case study data. The data was

interpreted in relation to the theory in Chapters 2 and 3. The formulation of the themes reflects the thinking framework of the discourse researcher.

Collection 1: Boundary Management

Theme 1: The interaction between Authority, Capability, Identity, Role and Task

Theme 2: Differentiation and Boundaries

Theme 3: Integration and Boundaries

Theme 4: Misalignment and Disintegration

Theme 5: The Adverse Effects of Boundary Problems

Collection 2: The Role and Tasks of the Consultant

Theme 1: Identification of Boundary Issues

Theme 2: Working with Integration

Theme 3: Working with Differentiation

Theme 4: Asking Questions

Theme 5: Defining Hypotheses

Theme 6: Making Decisions

Theme 7: Taking Action

Collection 3: The Consulting Process

Theme 1: Engaging

Theme 2: Contracting

Theme 3: Analysing

Theme 4: Intervening

Theme 5: Disengaging

6.2.1 Themes and Hypotheses Related to Boundary Management

The themes presented here are directly related to the systems psychodynamic view of boundary management as explained in section 3.1. Research hypotheses were formulated for each of the themes. The working hypothesis approach is used here (see 4.3.6). The hypotheses are woven into the themes instead of being extracted after the facts are presented. This practice illustrates the “work as you go” (see 2.2) nature of working hypotheses.

Theme 1: The Interaction between Authority, Ability, Identity, Role and Task

In this case the consultant consulted to Group IT, Central IT, the Info Sec Team, each of the Business Unit IT divisions, Internal Audit, Operational Risk, the Technical Architecture Board and the Information Security Forum. Each of these organisational sub-systems and forums possessed their own levels of authorisation, capabilities, identities, roles and tasks in relation to group information security. (See section 5.2.)

The primary shift during this consultation took place on a task level (see section 3.1.3). “Looking after information security” was re-positioned as an organisational level task, as opposed to an activity taken care of by the information security team. Many different divisions in the organisation were required to re-organise around this reality. Initially each division only focused on information security in its own area. The new group level primary task altered the identity of the Group Information Security Forum (see 3.3). The forum now became a space for organisational decision making rather than a forum where different divisions debated only their own issues.

The role of the forum was to make decisions and authorise all information security related activities in the group. (See section 5.2.)

A further development was that the Information Security team was no longer responsible for “protect[ing] the information of the group”. This became the responsibility of the business units. The Info Sec Team was now accorded the primary task of “oversight and promotion of information security within the group”. This shift in primary task altered the identity and role of the Information Security team (see 3.3). Before the shift it had been regarded as the “information security police” authorised by Group IT but was now perceived as separate from Group IT. Its new identity was one of policy advisor and educator: its members would now play a consulting role in the organisation. (See section 5.2.)

Working Hypothesis 1: *A change in primary task may lead to a change in identity and role.*

The alteration in primary task and role changed the authority relationship between the Information Security Team and the Business Units (see 3.3). The business units now shouldered the responsibility and decision making authority in relation to group information security. This authority was handed over from the Info Sec team to the business unit IT divisions.

Working Hypothesis 2: *A change in primary task, role and identity may lead to a shift in authority.*

Capability in this case played a role in the sense that each sub-organisation was tasked with those responsibilities that it was able to fulfill. There was, for instance, much discussion between the Information Security Team and Group Audit about who would be “best equipped” to carry out “vulnerability tests” in the business. The role of the Information Security Officer was also considered in terms of the tasks that such a person would need to perform and the capabilities that he or she would need to possess.

Working Hypothesis 3: *Changes in role and task need to be congruent with the capabilities of people and groups.*

Theme 2: Differentiation and Boundaries

In Case Study Two, boundary management (see 3.2.1) occurred between Group IT, Central IT, Business Unit IT, the Information Security Team and the Business Units. Each of these sub-organisations is differentiated from each other in terms of identity, role and task. They are given various levels of authorisation and possess different capabilities.

Group IT constructed its own identity around its scope. This was group wide, the primary task being to provide integrated IT solutions to the organisation as a whole. Its members played this role through a series of meetings and forums which they created. Central IT staff created their identity around their primary task. They were primarily responsible for the infrastructure of the organisation as a whole and functioned in support of the business units and their respective IT divisions. Their role

as support staff was deeply engrained in their identity. The business units' IT staff identified strongly with the different business units where they were located. Their primary task was: "to support their business units by providing IT support and solutions". They performed this role by according clear priority to their own business unit. The Information Security Team created their identity around their primary task: "to protect the organisation's information". They were unable, though, to take up this role effectively due to much resistance from the business units. Each of the different roles, tasks and identities differentiated the different sub-organisations from each other (see section 3.2.1).

Each of these areas was also authorised in different ways. Group IT received organisational authority from the Chief Executive of the organisation, but lacked support from the business units. Central IT and the Information Security Team was authorised by Group IT but similarly did not gain full support from the business units. The last mentioned were all authorised by the Chief Executive whereas the business unit IT divisions were authorised by their units. Furthermore different collective abilities were found in each of these areas, resulting from their differences in primary task and focus. These abilities were carefully considered in the Group Information Security Workshop in order to establish the primary task and role of each area in relation to group information security.

Working Hypothesis 4: *Capability, authority, identity, role and task are important boundary differentiators.*

There was too little distinction in the minds of the business unit IT divisions in terms of the identity of Group IT and the Information Security team. To the first mentioned the Information Security team represented everything that Group IT also represented. Group IT and the Information Security team threatened the autonomy of the Business Unit IT divisions.

Working Hypothesis 5: *A lack of differentiation of two or more areas may lead to boundary confusion.*

Theme 3: Misalignment and Fragmentation

In this case, the Information Security Team members believed it was their primary task “to protect the organisation against information threats”. The Business Unit IT divisions viewed the Information Security Team as “policy writers”. They (the Business Units) viewed themselves as responsible for protecting the organisation from information threats. There were some fundamental implications on a task level because of this role conflict. As policy writers, the information security team would produce a strategy for information security in collaboration with the Business Unit IT divisions. “Vulnerability testing” would be a service provided to the Business Unit IT divisions on request. If, however, the Information Security Team was in fact responsible for protecting the organisation from threats it would dictate policy based on best practice. Vulnerability tests would be done involuntarily to expose vulnerabilities in the IT security network. The latter is exactly what took place: it was met with huge criticism on the part of the Business Unit IT divisions. The relationship between the Information Security Team and these divisions was damaged.

Consequently the organisation was no longer integrated in terms of information security. The splits in the system led to an information security crisis.

A further example of misalignment occurred between Group IT and the Business Unit IT divisions. The identity, role and primary task of Group IT was not supported by the IT divisions in the business units. For this reason they consciously and unconsciously de-authorised the efforts of Group IT. This led to fragmentation in the IT world.

Working Hypothesis 6: *Misalignment between different organisational sub systems in terms of identity role and task can lead to conflict and damage the efficiency of the organisation.*

Working Hypothesis 7: *Misalignment between different organisational sub systems in terms of identity role and task may lead to authorisation issues.*

Theme 4: The Adverse Effects of Boundary Problems

In this case an entire organisation became anxious about its ability to protect the organisation against information threats. The Business Unit IT divisions also became uneasy because Group IT began to threaten their autonomy (and therefore their authority boundaries and decision making power). They were also envious of Group IT, leading to aggressive behaviour (see section 5.2). Both these sources of anxiety and feelings of envy resulted in an entire series of unconscious dynamics, stress, conflict, aggressiveness and anti-task behaviour (see section 2.2).

The Information Security Team had been psychologically authorised to contain anxiety about information security (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbeaert, 2008) but became ineffective in the group owing to a range of unconscious dynamics and anti task behaviour. Suddenly anxiety about information security was uncontained. This led to the escalation of conflict, stress and unconscious defences. At the same time feelings of envy among the members of IT in the business units fuelled aggressiveness towards the Info Sec Team. After the information security workshop the boundaries of the different role players in the information security space were well defined and negotiated. The information security forum now afforded a shared space for dialogue, decision-making and leadership in relation to group wide information security issues. Anti-task behaviour and unconscious defences in the system also diminished over time.

Working Hypothesis 8: *Boundary management as an organisational task helps to control stress and conflict. When boundaries become blurred, unclear or conflicting, anxiety and other negative emotions increase and the organisation becomes dysfunctional.*

6.2.2 Themes Related to the Role of the Consultant

The themes presented here are directly related to boundary management consulting (see section 3.3), more specifically the role of the consultant.

Theme 1: Identification of Boundary Issues

In this case, several boundary issues were identified. The Information Security Team in the mind of the Business Unit IT divisions (outline) differed from the way the Information Security Team viewed itself (inline). There was also misalignment in the organisation about the role of Business Unit IT, Central IT, Group IT, Internal Audit, Operational Risk, the Technical Architecture Board, the Group IT Management Committee and the Information Security Forum in relation to information security issues (see section 3.3). The boundaries between the Information Security Team and Group IT were blurred in the minds of the Business Unit IT divisions. The consultant noted these issues and defined them as working hypotheses, which are provided in Chapter 5.

Theme 2: Working with Integration

In this case study the consultant worked on the integration of the entire organisation as regards the task of information security (see section 3.2.1). Integration meant the alignment and authorisation of the Business Unit IT divisions, Central IT, Group IT, Internal Audit, Operational Risk, the Technical Architecture Board, the Group IT Management Committee and the Information Security Forum in relation to such security issues. Alignment and authorisation were effected in line with the capabilities, identities, roles and tasks of these different sub-organisations (see section 3.3). This consultation also included consulting to the re-defining, and negotiating of, the identity, role and primary task of the Information Security Forum.

Theme 3: Working with Differentiation

The consultant in this case study worked with specific areas to clarify their own identities, roles and tasks (see 3.2.1). This process helped them to clearly differentiate themselves from other parts of the organisation. The Info Sec Team differentiated itself from Group IT. Each of the following areas, Business Unit IT, Central IT, Group IT, Internal Audit, Operational Risk, the Technical Architecture Board, and the Group IT Management Committee differentiated themselves in relation to the organisational task of protecting the information in the organisation. Each undertook a different role and primary task in relation to information security. These were related to their distinct identities and abilities. (See section 5.2.)

6.2.3 Themes Related to the Tasks of the Consultant

In this consulting stance the consultant is the ultimate instrument of analysis. The themes identified furnish information about some of the key consulting activities (see 2.4).

Theme 1: Questioning

In this case questioning emerged as a theme in terms of the consultant's approach. A series of questions was asked by the consultant as the consultation proceeded. Four types of questions could be identified.

Questions about the primary task of the consulting assignment.

These questions included queries such as: “What is the primary task of the consulting assignment? What should be done here? What is it that this system ultimately wants to accomplish”.

Questions about the scope of the consultation.

These included such questions as: “Which parts of the system are at play? Who is and isn’t the client? Where should the work be done?”

Questions about general systems psychodynamics.

These included questions such as: “What is causing anxiety in the system? What is the organisation doing in order to deal with anxiety? Which defences are at play? Which assumption groups are present? What unconscious dynamics are at play?”

Questions about boundary management.

These questions encompassed queries such as: “Who is and isn’t part of teams? Who is called what and what does it mean? Who does what? Who is in charge of what? Who can do what? How differentiated or integrated are different sub-systems? Are there any splits in the system? Are there any serious discrepancies between the inlines and outlines of different areas? Are there any parts of the organisation that need to negotiate their boundaries with any other part of the organisation? Do people in the same team or division have a shared sense of their boundaries?”

Theme 2: Defining Hypotheses

In this case study interrelated interpretations were developed by the consultant. These were built on each other. The interpretations also accorded focus to the consultant's efforts. Each interpretation was created using the information that was available at the time. The data was analysed according to systems psychodynamic theory. Each interpretation was tested by gathering further information. They were then modified, discarded or expanded. The following interpretation serves as an example:

There is misalignment between the Info Sec team and the rest of the organisation in terms of the identity, role and task of the Info Sec team. The Info Sec team is not authorised by the Business Units to perform their primary task.

In section 2.2 the concept of working with open ended hypotheses was presented. The consultant in this case was creating his own concepts of the dynamics at play and modified the concepts as the consultation progressed.

Theme 3: Making Decisions

Several decisions were made during this consulting assignment: to run a team workshop for the Information Security team, to facilitate discussions between James and the business unit IT heads, to conduct a large scale boundary management session. There were further decisions about who to include in each of those sessions, what exercises to do and how the agenda would look, as well as decisions about every meeting that should or should not take place etcetera.

Theme 4: Taking action

The consultant in this case was active. He facilitated meetings and discussions, engaged the client system with suggestions and observations, actively included certain parties in discussions where they would not naturally have participated and consciously pursued the direction provided by the hypotheses that he developed.

6.2.4 Themes Related to the Consulting Process:

The consulting process steps used to describe the consulting process in this case appeared in Chapter 4. The consulting process followed in this case was described in Chapter 5. The key themes here correspond to the consulting process that was followed:

Theme 1: Engaging

Theme 2: Contracting (and planning)

Theme 3: Analysing

Theme 4: Intervening

Theme 5: Disengaging

6.2.5 Research Hypothesis

In this section two sets of research hypotheses are presented. These are developed from the themes presented in section 6.2. The first set concentrates on boundary

management as a task of the organisation while the second is focused on boundary management consulting as a task of the consultant.

(a) Research Hypotheses about Boundary Management

There were eight working hypotheses about boundary management in this case:

Working Hypothesis 1: A change in primary task may lead to a change in identity and role.

Working Hypothesis 2: A change in primary task, role and identity may lead to a shift in authority.

Working Hypothesis 3: Changes in role and task need to be congruent with the capabilities of people and groups.

Working Hypothesis 4: Capability, authority, identity, role and task are important boundary differentiators.

Working Hypothesis 5: A lack of differentiation of two or more areas may lead to boundary confusion.

Working Hypothesis 6: Misalignment between different organisational sub systems in terms of identity role and task can lead to conflict and damage the efficiency of the organisation.

Working Hypothesis 7: Misalignment between different organisational sub systems in terms of identity role and task may lead to authorisation issues.

Working Hypothesis 8: Boundary management as an organisational task helps to control stress and conflict. When boundaries become blurred, unclear or conflicting,

anxiety and other negative emotions increase and the organisation becomes dysfunctional.

When these hypotheses are viewed in relation to each other they can be distilled into four key hypotheses. Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 are combined to form hypothesis 1b. Hypotheses 4 and 5 are combined into hypothesis 2b. Hypotheses 6 and 7 are combined to create hypothesis 3b. Hypothesis 8 is slightly adjusted and translates into hypothesis 4b (“b” Refers to Case B as defined in Chapter 4):

Working Hypothesis 1b: Capability, authority, identity, role and task are interrelated constructs. When you work with one, you also work with the others.

Working Hypothesis 2b: The constructs of capability, authority, identity, role and task creates boundaries between individuals, groups and organisations, Lack of boundaries or differentiation will lead to confusion.

Working Hypothesis 3b: Misalignment between different parts of an organisation in terms of capability, authority, identity, role and task can lead to conflict, authorisation issues and inefficiency.

Working Hypothesis 4b: Organisational boundary management helps to contain anxiety, negative emotions and conflict leading to a more functional organisation.

(b) Research Hypothesis about Boundary Management Consulting

In this case study three hypotheses about boundary management consulting emerged:

Working Hypothesis 1b: The role of the consultant in boundary management consulting is to (a) Help the organisation to become conscious of its own boundary management issues. (b) Help the organisation to integrate internally. (c) Help the organisation to differentiate sufficiently

Working Hypothesis 2b: The consulting tasks related to this role include: (a) questioning, (b) creating hypotheses, (c) decision making and (d) taking action.

Working Hypothesis 3b: The consulting process in boundary management work is a cycle of (a) engaging, (b) contracting, (c) diagnosing, (d) intervening and (e) disengaging.

6.3 INTEGRATION OF WORKING HYPOTHESES

Fifteen working hypotheses emerged out of the two cases in total. Some of these hypotheses are similar while others may build on each other. In this section a final set of hypotheses is distilled from the working hypotheses of the two case studies.

6.3.1 Working Hypotheses About Boundary Management

Nine hypotheses related to boundary management emerged out of the two case studies. They are listed below.

Five hypotheses emerged from Case A:

Working Hypothesis 1a: Capability, authority, identity, role and task are interrelated constructs. A shift in any of these constructs may result in a shift of one of the other.

Working Hypothesis 2a: Differences in identity, role, task, authority and capability create differentiation and boundaries between different organisations, or organisational sub-systems.

Working Hypothesis 3a: Shared identity, role and task, supported by adequate authorisation and corresponding capabilities, provide a sense of togetherness or connection to such a team or organisation.

Working Hypothesis 4a: Misalignment between different parts of an organisation in terms of capability, authority, identity, role and task can lead to splits, communication issues and fighting.

Working Hypothesis 5a: Boundary management helps to control stress and conflict in the organisation, leading to a more functional, well integrated organisation.

Four hypotheses emerged from Case B:

Working Hypothesis 1b: Capability, authority, identity, role and task are interrelated constructs. When you work with one, you also work with the others.

Working Hypothesis 2b: The constructs of capability, authority, identity, role and task create boundaries between individuals, groups and organisations, Lack of boundaries or differentiation will lead to confusion.

Working Hypothesis 3b: Misalignment between different parts of an organisation in terms of capability, authority, identity, role and task can lead to conflict, authorisation issues and inefficiency.

Working Hypothesis 4b: Organisational boundary management helps to contain anxiety and conflict leading to a more functional organisation.

When these working hypotheses are viewed in relation to each other they can be distilled into seven key hypotheses. Hypothesis 2a, 2b and 3a is used to formulate Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2a and 2b are combined to form hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3a is slightly adjusted to form hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 1a and 1b are combined here to form hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 4a and 3b are used to define hypotheses 5 and 6. Hypotheses 5a and 4b are combined into hypothesis 7.

Working Hypothesis: 1: Integration and differentiation occur along the parameters of capability, authority, identity, role, and task

Working Hypothesis 2: When one part of a system differentiates itself from another, in terms of capabilities, authority, identity, role and task, a psychological boundary is formed between those parts.

Working Hypothesis 3: When one part of a system shares capabilities, authority, identity, role or tasks with another, a psychological boundary is shared by those parts.

Working Hypothesis 4: A natural balance exists between capability, authority, identity, role and task. When the balance is disturbed the system will re-organise to restore the equilibrium.

Working Hypothesis 5: Misalignment between different parts of an organisation in terms of capability, authority, identity, role and task can lead to organisational fragmentation.

Working Hypothesis 6: The alignment between different parts of an organisation in terms of capability, authority, identity, role and task can lead to integration.

Working Hypothesis 7: Boundary management can reduce conflict and stress and their dysfunctional effects.

6.3.2 Working Hypotheses about Boundary Management Consulting

Six working hypotheses about boundary management consulting were developed in the two case studies. These hypotheses were identical for both case studies; the final three are presented here:

Working Hypothesis 1: The role of the consultant in boundary management consulting is to (a) Help the organisation to become conscious of its own boundary management issues. (b) Help the organisation to integrate internally. (c) Help the organisation to differentiate sufficiently

Working Hypothesis 2: The consulting tasks related to this role include: (a) questioning, (b) creating hypotheses, (c) decision making and (d) taking action.

Working Hypothesis 3: The consulting process in boundary management work is a cycle of (a) engaging, (b) contracting, (c) diagnosing, (d) intervening and (e) disengaging.

6.4 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The topic of boundary management was selected in this research as a central theme of organisational life. In this section the two clusters of working hypotheses presented in 6.3 are now presented as two research hypotheses. These two are postulated as primary tasks. The first such task relates to boundary management as an organisational task whereas the second relates to boundary management as a consulting task. Each of these primary tasks is supported by working hypotheses. The

integration of the research hypotheses and the working hypotheses is discussed here. The hypotheses are strengthened through integration with relevant literature.

6.4.1 Boundary Management as an Organisational Task

Research Hypothesis 1: The primary task of boundary management is to hold the polarities of integration and differentiation, not allowing the system to become fragmented or overly integrated (see section 3.2).

This is an organisational task. In other words, boundary management takes place on all organisational levels and is a continuous process that involves the whole organisation (Fuqua & Newman, 2002). The tendency of organisations to move through repetitive cycles of centralisation and de-centralisation furnishes evidence that there is no ideal point of balance between integration and differentiation (Lawrence & Lorsh, 1967; Schneider, 1985; Schein, 2004). In practice this is the continuous process of alignment and negotiation that occurs between individuals and groups in organisations (Hirschhorn & Gilmore (1992). The task of boundary management ultimately concerns the balance between being flexible and adaptable (a necessary need for survival of postmodern organisations) whilst at the same time connected (without relationships and collaboration there is no organisation) - see section 3.2.1).

Working Hypothesis: 1: Integration and differentiation occur along the parameters of capability, authority, identity, role, and task (see sections 3.1 & 3.2.1).

Organisational sub-systems, like teams and divisions, differentiate and integrate according to their distinct identities, roles and tasks. They also do this in terms of the ways in which they are authorised and the capabilities that they possess. (See section 3.3.)

Working Hypothesis: 2: When one part of a system differentiates itself from another, in terms of capabilities, authority, identity, role and task, a psychological boundary is formed between those parts. (See section 3.2.1 & 3.3.)

Through differentiation organisations make sense of the complex range of tasks and activities they need to perform. Differentiation provides focus in organisations. Clear differentiation also helps people there to know what their responsibilities are and what it is that they need to *carry on behalf of the organisation* (Hyde, 2006). Without differentiation or boundaries and the classification and categorisation that they provide, organisations would be unmanageable, and working in them would be untenable (Stapley, 1996, 2006). Different teams and divisions focus on different strategic areas and each develops its own special skills and knowledge (Dosi, Faillo & Marengo, 2009). They continuously work out who they are, what they should be doing, and who should be in charge, in relation to others in the organisation (Hirschhorn & Gilmore 1992; Schein, 2004).

Too much differentiation may nonetheless lead to a disconnected organisation. This could occur when aspects become so differentiated that they “break off” or become completely disassociated from the rest of the organisation (see 3.2.1).

Working Hypothesis 3: When one part of a system shares capabilities, authority, identity, role or tasks with another, a psychological boundary is shared by those parts. (See Chapter 3.)

Shared capabilities, authority, identity, roles and tasks integrate teams and sub-systems in the organisation (Gundlach et al, 2006). They bring individuals together, focus their collective efforts and create a sense of belonging. When this is taken too far one may find an organisation that is too integrated, overly controlled and rigid (see section 3.2.1).

Working Hypothesis 4: A natural balance exists between capability, authority, identity, role and task. When the balance is disturbed the system will re-organise to restore the equilibrium (see Chapter 3).

The interrelated nature of these constructs was apparent in both cases (see Chapters 5 & 6). There seems to be a level of face validity to this hypothesis. Tasks and roles are greatly entangled in organisations. Every role is given a task and all tasks seem to belong to a role. People in organisations identify themselves according to their roles and tasks because these are related to the primary task of the organisation and therefore to the very essence of the entity. Furthermore, in order to perform a task or play a role a set of related abilities needs to be available. Lastly, all individuals and teams in organisations exist in relation to each other. Roles and tasks are not possible if they are not authorised. The interrelatedness of these constructs provides several leverage points to the consultant with which he can work when boundaries are involved. Boundary management in theory can begin with any of the constructs; on

working with one the others will also be activated and brought into the consulting process.

Working Hypothesis: 5: Misalignment between different parts of an organisation in terms of capability, authority, identity, role and task can lead to fragmentation of the organisation. (See Chapter 3.)

When organisational sub-systems do not agree on the boundaries between one another, conflict arises. Conflict leads to splits and these result in a breakdown in communication, relationships, collaboration and ultimately the organisation's ability to perform its primary task (Hyde, 2006). This was clearly demonstrated in both the cases presented in Chapters 5 and 6. In this research the constructs of capability, authority, identity, role and task are considered as boundaries in their own right. Individuals and teams constantly need to manage their boundaries in the organisation through negotiating these constructs with each other. Without this, misalignment and organisational breakdown will take place, which emphasises the need for alignment.

Working Hypothesis: 6: The alignment between different parts of an organisation in terms of capability, authority, identity, role and task can lead to integration. See Chapter 3.

In order for the differentiated parts of the organisation to be connected to each other, alignment is necessary (Gundlach et al, 2006). This alignment across boundaries occurs when two or more parts of the organisation contain similar "organisations in the mind" (see section 3.3). When different parts of the organisation hold aligned

ideas of each other's identities, roles and tasks, and when these organisational sub-systems possess corresponding abilities, one will find that those parts are able to authorise each other, communicate, build relationships, collaborate and ultimately fulfill their primary tasks. All these assist in integrating the organisation.

Working Hypothesis: 7: Boundary management can reduce conflict and stress and their dysfunctional effects (Hyde, 2006).

This hypothesis places the focus of consulting on boundary management rather than on working directly with unconscious dynamics. As Miller, (2004, 15) observes, while unconscious dynamics are important in the pursuit of understanding organisational life; organisational structure and boundaries can contribute significantly towards the management of “stress and conflict and the dysfunctional effects of those realities”. He points towards a case where boundary management consulting was the focus, rather than working directly with the unconscious dynamics of the client system. As in the cases presented here it is important that the different dynamics in play should be seen, understood and accounted for. However, it may be argued that that one is not necessarily obliged to work with those dynamics directly. In some cases, where boundary issues are perceived as central to the consultation, boundary management might prove to be more effective than working with the unconscious psychological dynamics in the system. One might hypothesise that effective boundary management results in sound holding environments that in turn lead to the containment of difficult emotions in the organisation (see “holding” and “containment” in section 2.2).

6.4.2 Boundary Management as a Consulting Task

Research Hypothesis 2: The primary task of the consultant in boundary management consulting is to help the organisation's managing its own boundaries. This is carried out through taking up the role of organisational consultant, performing the consulting tasks and by applying a consulting process (see sections 2.4 & 3.3).

Working Hypothesis 1: The role of the consultant in boundary management consulting is to:

- (a) Help the organisation to become conscious of its own boundary management issues.

Using the hypotheses in section 6.1, the consultant needs to identify organisational boundary issues and raise them to the consciousness of the organisation. This is the first step that the latter needs to take in order to think about its own experience and understand it in boundary terms (see section 2.2).

Two broad categories of issues need to be attended to. Firstly, *integration issues*: These are characterised by a breakdown in collaboration between individuals and groups, misalignment and organisational splits. Secondly, *differentiation issues*: characterised by overlapping boundaries, lack of focus, and confusion about responsibilities and accountabilities. (See section 3.2.1.)

- (b) Help the organisation to differentiate sufficiently (see 3.2.1).

Organisational differentiation deals with creating and clarifying boundaries in the organisation. When the consultant works with differentiation the focus is on the differences between groups and sub-organisations. Assisting the organisation to differentiate includes aiding different organisational sub-systems to understand the boundaries between them and helping them to clarify and negotiate their boundaries with each other. This task is not the same as creating alignment but is a prerequisite for it.

(c) Help the organisation to integrate internally (see 3.2.1).

Organisational integration is the task of connecting the different organisational sub-systems with each other. When the consultant works with integration the consultation will be focused on the alignment of the boundaries of different sub-systems in the organisation. Aiding the organisation to align these, includes creating understanding and collaboration between different parts of the organisation. Alignment relates to a shared understanding of *the organisation in the mind* between different organisational sub-systems. Using the hypotheses in 6.3.1 the consultant will work with different parts of the organisation to negotiate their boundaries with each other.

Integration furthermore concerns creating shared boundaries between individuals in the organisation. This would encompass assisting with the forming of new teams, the integration of new teams into the organisation and the integration of new members into their teams and into the organisation. Making use of the hypotheses in 6.3.1 the consultant would work with different individuals in a team, division or organisation in

order to establish shared meaning and understanding about the boundaries of such a team, division or organisation.

Working Hypothesis 2: The consulting tasks related to boundary management consulting are questioning, creating hypotheses, decision making and taking action:

(a) Questioning

Questioning is an important consulting tool (Dillon, 2003). The consultant may ask several kinds of questions. The following categories emerged from the cases presented in Chapters 5 and 6:

- Questions about the primary task of the consulting assignment (see “primary task”, section 2.2):

These questions are essential because they accord purpose to the consulting relationship and the efforts of the consultant. The primary task provides strategic clarity. In practice, the primary task is not always clear when a consulting assignment starts. The consultant needs to find it. Questions about the primary task guide the consultant through this very fundamental undertaking. Searching for the primary task is in itself a consulting task. It is also a continuous activity or a process. The primary task of consulting assignments can be elusive: it changes as the consulting assignment continues and is often not discovered in the obvious information, but, rather, under the surface. Identifying the correct primary task is by no means the aim; searching to understand the primary task is what is important.

- Questions about the scope of the consultation (see section 1.2):

Working psychodynamically with organisations means that everything is on the table and nothing can be taken for granted. Questions about the scope of the consultation are critical if the consultant intends to be effective. It is impossible, practically speaking, to physically work with the organisation as a whole. The consultant needs to work out where to focus, who to include and who not. Questions about the scope of the consultation, as in the case of the primary task, are continuously asked as the consulting assignment progresses. The scope alters continuously, while the primary client may even change over time; the consultant needs to understand, what is part of the consultation and what is not. To a degree, questions about scope assist the consultant to manage the boundaries of the consulting assignment.

- Questions about organisational dynamics in general (see Chapter 2):

In this study the consultant operated in terms of the systems psychodynamic consultancy stance, but focused on boundaries specifically. Boundary management consulting cannot be separated from the systems psychodynamic stance, of which it is in fact part. The consultant needs to understand the dynamics of the organisation holistically in order to work with it and consult to it.

- Questions about boundaries (see Chapter 3):

Specific questions about boundaries assist the consultant with boundary management consulting. Organisations are systems which consist of many sub-systems, all with their own boundaries. All the organisational interactions, communication, relationships and collaboration take place across these boundaries. Queries about boundaries and boundary management aid the consultant to focus on the aspect of the organisation where all human interaction takes place: on the boundaries. A set of

boundary questions was considered in section 3.3. Certain additional questions emerged in the research: How differentiated or integrated are different sub-systems? Are there any splits in the system? Are there any serious discrepancies between the inlines and outlines of different areas? Are there any parts of the organisation that need to negotiate their boundaries with any other part of the organisation? Do people in the same team or division have a shared sense of their boundaries?

(c) Creating Hypotheses (see section 2.2):

Hypothesis building is central to the systems psychodynamic stance. Working with boundary management from this stance requires that data be analysed by means of systems psychodynamic theory and the hypotheses in 6.3.1. Hypotheses would then be formulated. Once a hypothesis is formulated more data needs to be collected and the hypothesis tested. As more data becomes available hypotheses are refined, discarded, or expanded.

The hypotheses provide direction and focus to the consultant and create an approach embracing continuous analysis and exploration. The task of hypothesis building is never completed because new data may always provide new insights. Constructing the hypotheses, as in the case of discovering the primary task, is more important than creating the correct one. The very process of creating them guides the consultant in a very specific fashion. It focuses the consultant on finding answers, rather than having the answers; it makes the consulting stance explorative, inquisitive, open and adventurous. At the same time, it demands diligence, discipline and insight. The hypotheses have a tendency to expose the consultant's lack of understanding. They

drive the consultant to look for deeper layers of meaning and they help the consultant to integrate the logical with the illogical, the obvious with the not so obvious, and the known with the unknown.

(c) Decision making (see section 2.2):

Decision making is an important consulting task (Shawver, Thompson & Mattare, 2004). All the information will never be available. The consultant needs to consider the hypotheses and make decisions about the directions that need to be taken in the consulting assignment. Decision-making moves the consulting assignment forward, provides new avenues to explore and helps the consultant to test hypotheses. The consultant will inevitably arrive at good as well as bad decisions. All of this becomes part of the consulting data and the process of hypothesis construction.

(d) Taking action (see section 2.2)

Taking action is about “doing”. Once a decision is made the consultant needs to intervene or do something (Lambrechts et al, 2009). Everything the consultant does is part of acting. Once the current phase of thinking is complete, interaction with the client system must take place. Taking action in the boundary management space can comprise almost any form of action related to typical organisational consulting.

Taking action might seem like an obvious task to include here. Nonetheless it is of the utmost importance. Consulting in practice is always in motion. The system never stops. Situations change even if the consultant does not act. Taking action is about

timing. It concerns choosing the correct actions at the right time; it is also about selecting new actions after the wrong ones were taken. The inclusion here of *taking action* as a consulting task serves as a reminder that consulting is an activity and that every consulting interaction, even just posing a question to a client, is in fact an intervention.

All of the consulting tasks mentioned above take place in relation to the idea that the consultant uses the self as instrument (McCormick & White, 2000). The consulting tasks require positive and negative capabilities in the consultant. Simpson, French and Harvey (2002) distinguish between positive capabilities (abilities that promote decisive action) and negative capability (abilities that promote reflective inaction). The tasks of questioning, and hypothesis building, cannot be described as *inactive* but require negative capability. The tasks of decision-making and acting, on the other hand, require positive capability. The author believes that a balance of these qualities is needed for effective consulting.

Working Hypothesis 3: The consulting process related to boundary management consulting comprises engaging, contracting, analysing, intervening, and disengaging:

The consulting process was discussed in section 2.4. The discussion below adds to the literature discussion through the additions of the author's experience and the concept of "joint activity" (Lambrechts et al, 2009). (Also see section 2.3.)

The consulting process in boundary management work is a cycle of engaging, contracting, analysing, intervening and disengaging. It is a continuous cycle that feeds

back into itself as the consultation continues. Sometimes different phases can take place simultaneously. Contracting with the client is also an opportunity for analysis. The contracting discussion is also a form of planning, while planning with the client is also an intervention. Every time the consultant intervenes, new information will come to the fore, fresh planning and contracting will be possible and new interventions can be made.

(a) Engaging

The consultation starts here. Engaging deals with forming relationships, entering into the client system and building initial trust. It concerns establishing whether the client would be served by a possible consulting relationship. Engaging also involves chemistry. Consultants need to be honest with themselves during the engagement phase about their own intentions, their pre-conceived ideas about the client, and their ability to deal with what the client is asking. During this phase the consultant also needs to work out whom the client is and what it is that needs to be done. It was apparent in the cases presented in this study that the engagement phase is not always clear cut. If the consultant is already in the system, it is sometimes hard to work out where the consultation starts. In both the above cases the engagement phase was characterised by the unfolding of a new consulting assignment. The engagement phase spills over into the contracting phase.

(b) Contracting

Contracting is central to the consulting relationship. It is a means to manage expectations, set goals, agree mutual responsibilities, define the boundaries of client and consultant relationships and establish what needs to be done. The issues that must be contracted cannot be recorded on a list. Contracting is, rather, a way of interacting with the client, than mentioning items on a list. Contracting deals with negotiating and creating agreements. It also encompasses disclosing intentions and being open with the client. Furthermore, it is also about admitting limitations and being realistic. The research findings clearly demonstrated that contracting is a continuous process and that it occurs as the consultation unfolds.

(c) Analysing

Analysing involves the gathering of information and making sense of it. Some of the information might be very intangible, such as the feelings that the client creates in the consultant. Everything is part of the data. The consultant chooses to focus on the parts that seem to be important. The sense making process includes the application of theory and models. Hypothesis creation is also part of analysing. Every aspect that forms part of the analysing phase was discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. During the research it became clear that any contact with the client system provides data that can be analysed. Analysis therefore is also not an activity that takes place at a certain point of the consultation but is in fact carried on continuously.

(d) Intervening

During the intervening phase the consultant takes action. Intervention is anything that the consultant does in relation to the client system. Intervening might also include (and will often refer to) structured interventions. These could encompass specific work sessions, facilitated discussions and formal diagnostic interventions contracted with the client. It might be apparent at this point that analysing and intervening are strongly interrelated aspects of this consulting approach (see 2.2). In other words, a diagnostic activity is in fact, an intervention, while any other intervention also provides diagnostic information. This is the case for contracting as well. Contracting likewise takes place throughout the consulting process. Every time new data becomes available, further options open up to the consultant and new contracting needs to happen.

(e) Disengaging

This phase is important because it reminds the consultant that consulting assignments have beginnings and ends. In some cases the relationship alters to lower levels of intensity as already explained in former chapters. When consultants do not disengage after a period they become seduced by the system, they lose their objectivity and the relationship starts to serve needs of convenience. Client systems are very seductive and this can easily happen.

6.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the core findings of the research were presented as two sets of working hypotheses that were finally integrated to formulate the primary research hypotheses of the study. Two primary research hypotheses were discussed, the first focusing on boundary management as an organisational task and the second on boundary management consultation as a task of the consultant.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this Chapter conclusions are reached concerning the objectives set out in Chapter 1. The different roles taken up by the author in this research are reflected on. The limitations of the study are discussed in terms of the literature study and the empirical study. Recommendations are made with respect to boundary management as an organisational task and also as regards boundary management consulting. Recommendations are also advanced regarding possible future research on the subject.

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

In this section conclusions are provided in terms of the objectives listed in chapter one. These objectives were:

- (a) To describe the systems psychodynamic paradigm as a consulting framework.
- (b) To describe organisational boundaries from a systems psychodynamic perspective and to provide principles for boundary management consulting.
- (c) To apply a psychodynamic consulting framework to boundary management consulting in practice and describe the process.
- (d) To produce a research hypothesis about *boundary management* as an organisational task.

(e) To produce a research hypothesis about *boundary management* as a consulting task.

(a) The systems psychodynamic paradigm as a consulting framework.

The first aim of this study was to define the systems psychodynamic paradigm as a consulting framework. This objective was achieved in Chapter 2.

The said paradigm provided the theory for the consulting approach in this research. It was combined with Schein's (1988; 1999) *process consultation* and the *relational practice* approach of Lambrechts et al (2009) to form a consulting framework. The framework offered the consultant a model that could be used to analyse data and diagnose the client system. It also furnished steps that helped to contain the consultation.

The researcher concludes that systems psychodynamics supplies the organisational consultant with a conceptual framework that is able to deal with complexity and it takes into account the depth of the human experience. (See Chapter 1.) This framework can be combined with the process consultation model proposed by Schein (1988; 1999) and the relational practice approach of Lambrechts et al (2009).

(b) Organisational boundaries from a systems psychodynamic perspective and principles for boundary management consulting.

The second objective was to describe organisational boundaries from a systems psychodynamic perspective. This objective was attained in Chapter 3. Organisational boundaries were described as physical, psychological, individual, collective, conscious and unconscious phenomena. Identity, role, task, capability, and authority were considered as systems psychodynamic constructs and as primary boundary differentiators. The dynamic interactions between the different boundary dimensions and differentiators were also discussed.

The researcher concludes that the boundaries of the networked organisation exist as much in the psychological realm as in the physical realm (if not more). In other words, the boundaries of organisations today are negotiated, not just given, and exist in the minds of their staff rather than in the formal structure of the organisational hierarchy. (See Chapter 3.)

Identity, role, task, capability and authority are prominent concepts in the individual and collective minds of people that comprise boundaries in organisations today. (See Chapter 3.)

A further objective was to define a set of principles for boundary management consulting; it was achieved in Chapter 3 (see section 3.3). The principles offered a set of basic assumptions that the consultant could draw on during consultation. These principles also included a number of boundary differentiators. Each of the latter was described from a psychodynamic perspective (see section 3.1). Consulting questions and boundary management tasks corresponding to each of the differentiators were also described (see section 3.3).

The researcher concludes that the principles of boundary management consulting arrived at in this research assist the consultant to work with organisational boundaries in a multidimensional manner. The consultant operating from this perspective can engage organisational boundaries as physical, psychological, individual, collective, conscious and unconscious phenomena. The multidimensional focus of the principles causes it to be flexible. It also accounts for complexity but at the same time allows the work to be manageable.

(d) The application of a psychodynamic consulting framework to boundary management consulting in practice.

The fourth aim of the research was to apply a psychodynamic consulting framework to boundary management consulting in practice and to describe the process. The consulting framework was applied in two case studies (see Chapter 4). The case study data was presented and interpreted in Chapter 5.

The researcher concludes that the systems psychodynamic consulting framework for boundary management to be found in Chapter 3 can be applied to actual consulting situations where boundary management issues are present.

(e) A research hypothesis about *boundary management* as an organisational task.

The fifth aim of the research was to produce a research hypothesis about boundary management as a task of the organisation. This was attained in Chapter 6. Boundary

management was demonstrated to be a primary task of the organisation. The description of this task was supported by seven research hypotheses, which described the process of organisational integration and differentiation as the essence of boundary management.

The researcher concludes that boundary management is an activity of the whole organisation. In other words, the organisation as a whole manages its own boundaries continuously through a never ending process of integration and differentiation. (See Chapters 3 & 6.) This activity is at the core of organisational adaptation and survival.

(f) To produce a research hypothesis about *boundary management* as a consulting task.

The sixth aim of the research was to arrive at a research hypothesis about boundary management as a task of the consultant, as was achieved in Chapter 6. Boundary management consulting was defined as a primary task, supported by three research hypotheses. These described the role, tasks, and consulting process of the consultant during boundary management consulting.

The researcher concludes that boundary management consulting facilitates or supports the organisational activity of boundary management. The consultant in this role deals with boundaries as they exist in the minds of people. Consultants also work with the human interactions (conversations, negotiations, conflicts etc.) in the organisation that result in the phenomena of integration and differentiation that lie at the heart of boundary management in organisations.

In conclusion, this research presents a theoretical reconstruction of organisational boundary management and boundary management consulting. One may argue that this reconstruction follows the trend, in organisations today, of moving away from the notion of physical, structural boundaries towards psychological, negotiated boundaries. Boundary management is not regarded here as a reaction to a problem but as a continuous organisational process. In the same light, boundary management consulting is not focused on repairing problems but on supporting the continuous process of integration and differentiation within the organisation.

In conclusion, the researcher believes that the general objective of the research, namely *to study organisational boundary management and boundary management consulting in order to describe a related consulting model for organisational consulting psychologists*, has been attained. The two primary tasks and hypotheses presented in Chapter 6 constitute a model of consulting to boundary management that describes the dynamic nature of such management in relation to a set of core variables while also defining the role, tasks and process of boundary management consulting.

7.2 REFLECTION ON COMPLEXITY AND ROLES

In this research the management of the boundaries between the different roles occupied by the author and researcher became very challenging. Consequently it was important to understand the differences between consultant, participant observer, discourse researcher, author and student. Each of these roles was taken up, sometimes simultaneously, which added a significant level of complexity to the research project.

Differentiating between these roles while at the same time understanding how they were related and integrated became a central theme in completing the research. It was interesting how the very topic under scrutiny played itself out in the research project itself. This was also a reminder of the complexities presented by the work of consulting. There are always different roles in play. Understanding these roles and managing their boundaries therefore seem to be central to the work of organisational consultants.

7.3 LIMITATIONS

In this section the limitations of the research are pointed out with reference to the literature study and the empirical research.

(a) Limitations of the Literature Study

The most obvious limitation of this research is the choice of systems psychodynamics as the research paradigm. The paradigm contains its own limitations and assumptions and is therefore exclusive of certain perspectives or ideas that might be held by other paradigms or schools of psychology. These *other ideas* may very well provide insight into organisational boundaries and boundary management consulting that is not reflected here.

The five constructs that were chosen as the primary boundary differentiators in this research created an inherent limitation. The literature review and focus on boundaries was strongly influenced by these constructs, the selection of which was based on

literature, as well as the knowledge, experience and intuition of the consultant and researcher. Although it was possible to discover empirical evidence in the literature that supports the relevance of each of these constructs, it cannot be claimed that those constructs are the only ones that determine boundaries. Hirschhorn (1992), for instance, includes political boundaries as an element while the researcher did not choose to include it.

(b) Limitations of the Empirical Research

The case study design employed for this qualitative research consisted of two different case studies. Both were conducted in the same organisation. The consultant in the case studies is also an employee of this organisation. The limitations that are posed by this stem from the fact that the consultant and all the people in both case studies form part of a similar organisational culture. This design made some obvious comparisons impossible. It was not possible to compare the use of the framework within different organisational cultures; it was also not possible to make comparisons between the experiences of internal consultants and the experiences of external consultants.

The use of working hypotheses as a primary tool of analysis does have certain inherent limitations. Amado (1995) believes that working hypotheses as a research tool always require that the assumptions should be *checked out*. This is correct. All the hypotheses in this research study could be explored in further research. They are, to some extent, open ended. This is an inherent reality of working hypotheses. The

limitation lies in the fact that they are not absolute truths. They are only applicable and usable until proven differently.

The results presented in Chapter 5 might seem cumbersome to some readers. In Chapter 5 a first level of interpretation of the research data is provided as explained earlier, but this chapter also provided data for analysis in Chapter 6. The researcher believes that omitting this chapter would have reduced the transparency of the research drastically. The disadvantage of including it, however, is the added complexity that it brings in terms of different research roles.

In this study the consultant in the two cases and the researcher are the same person. The stance that the consultant takes is that of using himself as instrument. This *instrument* of course displays very human limitations. The knowledge and experiences of the consultant will be unique to him. There are distinct limits to what he knows, to how well he can interpret his own experiences and to how he understands his client system. This also imparts a unique flavour to the entire research project. It is not possible to claim with certainty that other consultants would be able to successfully consult to boundary management using the hypotheses that were developed in this research.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are made here in relation to the research problems that were posed in Chapter 1. Two central research problems were posed in this study. The first had to do with understanding boundary management as an organisational task; the second

with understanding boundary management consulting as a consulting task. Recommendations are also made about possible future research on the topic.

(a) Recommendations about Boundary Management as an Organisational Task

In the light of this research it is important that organisations actively work at managing their boundaries effectively. This implies that organisations need to create environments where people are relatively free to negotiate their own boundaries with each other and where hierarchy and power do not interfere with this process. Organisations must endeavour very hard to create spaces and practices regarding communication that will enhance effective boundary management.

It is also recommended that teams and departments invest the necessary time to conduct conversations about their own identities, roles, tasks, authority and abilities. These discussions should aid them to create shared meaning about these internal boundaries which would enable them more effectively to negotiate those same boundaries with other parts of the organisation in which they work.

Organisations should become aware of the tightrope between integration and differentiation if they intend to be successful. Organisations that are overly controlled and bureaucratic should differentiate themselves more while organisations that seem to be fragmented and misaligned should integrate themselves more fully.

Leaders in organisations should become aware of the patterns of their organisations and of how boundary management can be used effectively to strengthen the culture of their organisations.

(b) Recommendations about Boundary Management as a Consulting Task

In this research a theoretical reconstruction of boundary management is provided in the form of hypotheses and a proposed consulting process. These, used in conjunction with each other, could be applied by consultants as a consulting model. The model facilitates the consultant's understanding of the primary task of consulting to boundary management and also of the key dynamics involved in the process. The proposed model is not intended as a working model in the strictest sense, but rather as a flexible guide to consultants that should be used to stimulate thinking, questioning and engaging of the client system.

In Chapter 1 it was pointed out that consultants need to be able to work with complexity and the systemic and dynamic aspects of organisations in order really to make a contribution. Focusing on boundaries will assist consultants to do this. It is recommended that consultants include, as part of their assessment and analysis of the organisations they consult to, deliberate attention to the boundaries of the organisation. This would include focusing on the extent to which the organisation is integrated and differentiated.

It is further recommended that consultants pay more attention to that which lies under the surface of the organisation. The unconscious aspects of organisational life are often ignored but, as indicated in this study, often drive the behaviours with which consultants are presented.

In addition it is recommended that consultants make use of the psycho-educational model that is proposed in this research: it aids organisations to learn how to manage their own boundaries. Consulting that contributes to the capability of the organisation to help itself is always more valuable than consulting which merely helps to solve problems.

It is recommended lastly that consultants focus more on the consulting process than on the interventions they design. Process consultation seems to be a good way really to help organisations to help themselves.

(c) Recommendations about Future Research on the Topic

Much more may be done to explore the working hypotheses that were presented in this research. Each of these hypotheses can be used as working hypotheses in other organisations or different consulting contexts. Through this process they could be expanded and improved. The consulting framework presented here might also be tested with different consultants. It would be useful to examine the assumptions of this research together with consultants who are outside the organisations to which they consult. It would also be interesting to examine these in situations where the organisational culture is very different from the one investigated in this research. The

principle of using one's self as an instrument will convey a uniqueness to each consulting intervention where different consultants are used. Some comparisons would be interesting.

Different research designs could also be applied to test the findings and hypotheses of this study. They could, for example, be employed in a group relations training event or in a longitudinal study. Group relations training should provide a semi controlled environment in which the research hypotheses can be tested and analysed. A longitudinal study would furnish the opportunity to test the effect of the consulting intervention; and so forth.

It would be possible to add more elements to the proposed authority, ability, identity, role and task as boundary constructs. The political elements of boundaries, for instance, could be explored much more fully as these were almost omitted in this research study.

The concept of boundary management may well be further explored through the lenses of different schools of psychology. The existential school of psychology might, for instance, deal differently with the boundary question "who am I" than would systems psychodynamics. Ideas such as *purpose in life* versus *primary task* might be interesting to explore. Every school of psychology holds to distinct truths and perceiving boundaries through all those different *lenses* would most certainly add to the theory and understanding of the phenomena.

It would be valuable to test the hypotheses in contexts that are unrelated to work, for instance in a family system or community. In these contexts the constructs might find new meaning and further dimensions could be added to the understanding of boundary management as a human reality. In this research boundary management was studied within a work context and within a corporate environment. In new environments one would pose different research questions like: What are the boundaries of morality? or What is the boundary between good and evil?

7.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this Chapter, conclusions, reflections, limitations and recommendations were formulated. Conclusions were reached concerning the research problem that was stated in Chapter 1. The researcher reflected on the different roles he played during the research project and commented on the complexity of multiple roles. The limitations of the study were pointed out in terms of the literature study and the empirical research, while recommendations were expressed to organisations and consultants; suggestions were also made in terms of possible future research.

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**BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT: A MODEL FOR ORGANISATIONAL
CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGISTS**

by

WILLEM HENDRIK STRUWIG

DEGREE: DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

SUBJECT: CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGY

PROMOTER: PROF FVN CILLIERS

SUMMARY

This qualitative research addressed systems psychodynamic consultation to boundary management. The systemic, dynamic and chaotic aspects of organisational life formed the backdrop against which the research was conducted. The general objective of the research was to describe a relevant consulting model for organisational consulting psychologists related to boundary management. Literature was reviewed in order to describe organisational consulting and organisational boundaries from the systems psychodynamic perspective. Key principles for boundary management consulting were also described.

The objectives of the empirical study were to apply psychodynamic consulting to boundary management and to describe the process. A further objective was to produce research hypotheses about boundary management from both an organisational and a consulting perspective. A case study design was followed. Descriptive data was gathered by means of a participative observer. The data was analysed by means of

systems psychodynamic discourse analysis. Ten working hypothesis were produced. These hypotheses culminated into two research hypotheses, describing the primary task of boundary management and boundary management consulting. The first research hypothesis was that the primary task of boundary management is to hold the polarities of integration and differentiation, not allowing the system to become fragmented or overly integrated. The second research hypothesis was that the primary task of the consultant in boundary management consulting is to help the organisation's managing its own boundaries. This is carried out through taking up the role of organisational consultant, performing the consulting tasks and by applying a consulting process. The researcher concluded that boundary management is an activity of the whole organisation. Boundary management consulting facilitates or supports this organisational activity.

Key terms: Organisational boundaries, boundary management, boundary management consulting, systems psychodynamics.

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements
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DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

in the subject

CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF F VAN N CILLIERS

JUNE 2010

CURRICULUM VITAE

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I declare that **BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT: A MODEL FOR ORGANISATIONAL CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGISTS** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNITURE

(Mr W H Struwig)

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DATE