

# **Trust work in organisation-stakeholder relationships**

## **Three discourse analytic studies**

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## Abstract

This thesis is about trust. Specifically it investigates how trust is established, developed and displayed in organisation-stakeholder relationships. The thesis is presented in the form of three studies, each based on a different organisation. The first study focuses on a newly established sustainability services consultancy which offers assurance of corporate, social and environmental performance and reporting. This study investigates how the consultancy lays the foundations for trusting client relationships by examining the proposals for work that are submitted to potential clients. The second study analyses an organisation-wide trust building strategy that is being implemented in a dental equipment supply organisation. The main aim of the strategy is to generate cultural change, improve manager-employee relationships and enhance productivity, thereby boosting the organisation's financial performance. This study examines how the social and discursive practices driven by the strategy offer both affordances and constraints to the development of trust across the organisation. The third study examines a case of established trust as displayed in the final meeting of a community liaison group that had been meeting for four-and-a-half years. It investigates how trust has been established in the group and how it is evidenced in the participants' meeting interactions.

What ties these case studies together is the fact that each emanates from an organisation that takes a 'relational' orientation to organisational practice (Lozano, 2005) and as such prioritises the development of 'mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships' (Zadek, 2004). In each case, the organisations view trust as the key to these relationships.

Trust is defined in this research as an interpersonal 'relational' phenomenon that is discursively constituted. Trust *per se* is seen as an outcome of parties making positive evaluations of each other's actions and interactions over time and in particular contexts. Several broad research questions arise from this conception of trust and form the basis of enquiry in this research. These include: What social and discursive practices can lead to parties positively evaluating each other's actions and interactions? What contextual conditions are likely to aid in the development of trust? In what ways is trust discursively and interactionally displayed?

A variety of discourse analytic methodologies are employed in addressing these questions. Their selection is, in large part, dependent on the type of data collected at each research site. These methodologies are set within a multi-perspectival discourse analytic research framework (Crichton, 2010; Candlin & Crichton 2011; Hocking 2010; Candlin & Crichton, 2013a), which allows for consideration of the interplay between a range of perspectives that are relevant to the development of trust. These perspectives include: the social and institutional context; the

purpose of interpersonal relationships; participants' prior experience with organisational practices and with each other; and participants' and analyst's 'narratives of experience' (Holmes, 2005; de Fina & Georgakopolou, 2008; Taylor et al, 2011).

Overall, the findings of this research and indeed of work on trust theory in general, support a widely held view that interpersonal trust is a complex multi-faceted construct requiring multiple modes of analysis and interpretation (Chapter 2). Although there appear to be some general underlying principles that apply to interpersonal trust and to its typical trajectories, for example, that trust is held to develop over time (Barney & Hansen, 1994; Solomon & Flores, 2001) and is an outcome of shared experience and interaction (Solomon & Flores, 2001), nonetheless, the manner in which trust is mediated is context and site-specific and varies *in situ*.

Using both ethnographic and discursive-interactional data, this thesis provides an empirically grounded contribution to trust research by offering 'descriptions, explanations and interpretations' (Fairclough 1992; 2010) of how relational trust can be developed in organisation-stakeholder relationships. In addition, it offers a practically relevant resource for organisations and practitioners wishing to integrate trust work into organisational practice.

## **Acknowledgements**

This research would not have been possible without the willingness of research organisations and participants to be involved. This thesis is a testament to the trust that they placed in me. To those who allowed me to interview them, thank you for sharing your experiences and thoughts about trust. To the Directors, Managers and HR personnel of the organisations in this study; Trevor, Peter, Alison, Vanessa, Richard, the community liaison group members, Sue, Susan, Christine and the project team at Velcon, my deepest gratitude.

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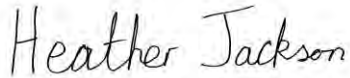
Most especially to my 'immediate' and wonderful family, Neil, Luke and Miriam for putting up with a sometimes distracted and grumpy wife and mum over the past few years. You will never know how much your support has meant to me, how much I love you, and how much I look forward to being available to you from now on.

## **Statement of Candidate**

### **Declaration**

This thesis is entirely my own work. All sources of information and all literature used in the preparation of the thesis have been indicated in the body of the thesis. All assistance provided in both the research phase and the development of the thesis has been appropriately acknowledged

The research presented in this thesis was approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee. Protocol number: HE28SEP2007-RO5450. A copy of the final ethics approval letter for this research is included in Appendix 5 page 237.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Jackson". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and slightly larger than the rest of the letters.

Heather Jackson

14 December 2012

## **Thesis Foreword**

This thesis is presented in three parts. Part 1 provides the overall framework for the three case studies which follow in Part 2. Part 3 draws the studies together by outlining and discussing overall conclusions and discussing the practical relevance of the research.

The intention of Part 1 is to introduce trust as a focal research theme, explain and justify the rationale for its selection, provide background information on the researcher and explain the selection of research sites. Part 1 also provides an overview of trust theory and explains how trust is conceptualised in this thesis. The theoretical framework, discourse analytic methodologies and research approach adopted for each of the three case studies is also presented in Chapter 3.

Accordingly, Part 1 consists of the following chapters:

**Chapter 1:** Introduction

**Chapter 2:** Conceptualising trust, ontological perspectives

**Chapter 3:** Theoretical framework, discourse analytic methodologies and research approach

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction to organisation-based trust

World events in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> and also at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century such as the rise in terrorism, the increase in natural disasters, the recognition of climate change together with the effects of globalisation have led to a renewed interest in the place that trust occupies in corporate, political and social spheres (Solomon & Flores, 2001; Fukuyama, 1996; Markova, 2004; Hardin, 2006). In addition, and perhaps most significantly for this research, the global financial crisis that took place in 2008, and which is often referred to as the GFC, became known in business and media circles as a GTC, a ‘global trust crisis’ (see Hall, 2007; Yandle, 2010). This crisis, more than any other recent global event, highlighted for the corporate world the devastating consequences of its failure to establish and maintain the trust of its stakeholders and especially of its shareholders and clients.

Trust lies at the heart of organisational life and is requisite for organisational effectiveness. Trust is crucial for product acceptance, service and exchange as well as for sustaining relationships with employees, clients, suppliers and local communities. An absence of trust, as many organisational researchers have commented (e.g. Wicks *et al*, 1999; Miranda & Klement, 2009) affects the organisational ability to remain competitive or indeed to survive. Audi sums this up succinctly by noting that ‘without trust, business as we know it is impossible’ (2008, p. 97).

Although there is general agreement in both academic and business domains that trust is for organisations a ‘strategic relational asset’ (Casaldo *et al*, 2010), there is little agreement on precisely what trust is. Despite a very large body of work on trust, there is, as Costa (2003), Rousseau *et al* (1998) Andaleeb (1992) and McAllister (1995) all note, no universally accepted meaning of the term trust. Trust research attests to the fact that trust remains definitionally confusing and exactly how it develops and operates within and across organisations remains unclear.

In spite of extensive research of trust in organisations, much of which is discussed in Chapter 2, few studies have attempted to capture the dynamic nature of trust and to account for its ability to develop and change over time. Trust is still perceived in the majority of organisationally based research as something that organisations ‘have’ rather than as something that they ‘do’.

Signalling this view of trust is the proliferation of quantitative studies of organisation-based trust. These studies generally favour the use of surveys or simulated environments (e.g. Axelrod, 1984; Ashraf *et al*, 2006; Dasgupta, 1988) to measure the strength of a person's trust at a single point in time. Referred to by Lewicki *et al* (2006) as providing 'snapshot' views of trust (see also section 2.3) these studies provide minimal opportunity for participant interaction and are limited in their ability to examine how interpersonal trust is conceptualised or how it develops. This type of quantitatively grounded research paints a narrow view of trust which is unreflective of the significant role that trust plays in the contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century organisation. Today's organisations are inclined to portray themselves primarily as 'relational' entities. The 'relational organisation' is defined by Keen (1990) Lozano (2005) Glazebrook (2004) Brunig *et al* (2008) and Taylor *et al* (2011) as one which prioritises the development of sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships with its stakeholders.

In the early 1980s, the question of who or what constituted an organisational stakeholder changed. This change was attributed to Freeman's ([1984], 2004) 'Stakeholder Theory'. Freeman's theory redefined organisational stakeholders from those without whom an organisation would cease to exist, such as shareholders, employees, clients and suppliers (see also Mitchell *et al*, 1997; Lozano, 2005) to 'any group who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives' (Freeman, 1984, p.25). From this point forward, stakeholders external to an organisation, sometimes described in research such as that of Freeman & Reid (1983) and Starik (1984) as 'influencers', 'claimants', 'constituents' or 'interest groups', were held to have a claim on the organisation. These 'external stakeholders', in Jonker & Foster's (2001) terms, differ from the traditional stakeholder in that they are not contractually obligated to an organisation and their influence or claim on an organisation might not be economically motivated. The link between external stakeholders and the organisation is, as Post *et al* (2005) explain, relational rather than transactional and, in lieu of any kind of formal contract to support the relationship, has to be trust based.

There is mounting evidence (e.g. Zadek, 2004; AccountAbility, 2005a; Zakhem, 2008) that the development of mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships is discursively mediated. Yet scholars frequently overlook this mediation, emphasising other factors in the development of such relationships and especially the role played in their development by various forms of trust. Yet mutually beneficial relationships are inherently trust-based. This mutual trust is, according to Rousseau *et al* (1998) and Solomon & Flores (2001), developed as an outcome of parties being able to make positive evaluations of each other's actions and interactions over time. Positive evaluations give rise to a confidence and 'trust' in each other's intentions and

competencies to maintain and not take advantage of the relationship. According to Koskinen & Pihlanto (2007) Lewicki *et al* (2006) and Solomon & Flores (2001) trust in these relationships is displayed through mutual understanding, mutual alignments and affective ties. Hardin (2004) and Lindberg (2000) also note that a further requirement of mutually beneficial relationships is that there is a commitment to the relationship and that parties must be willing to maintain them. Even though the views of these researchers all imply that discourse plays a significant role in the development of trust and that interpersonal relationships may be characterised by particular discursive features, this has seldom been empirically investigated. Researching trust in the context of stakeholder relationships has proved to be challenging for organisations, as they are not automatically equipped to highlight relational factors in their day-to-day work. There is also a difficulty in accessing and tracking naturally occurring trust data. Relational trust thus remains theoretically rather than practically grounded and examinations of how it plays out *in situ* are rare.

The key contribution of this thesis is that it begins to develop a discursive approach to relational trust. This approach was selected not only because discourse analysis (henceforth DA) has been lacking from most trust-based research to date, but also because DA uses a variety of analytic tools which allow for exploration of language(s) and practices(s) at both the macro and micro levels. Hence DA can provide not only insight into how trust is verbalised in the workplace, but also how it is conceptualised, mediated and enacted in this context and why. A more detailed rationale for the discourse analytic approach taken in this thesis is provided in Chapter 3 and specifically in section 3.2. Further, DA provides the means through which intangible phenomena such as trust can be empirically investigated. This research consequently uses empirical data to investigate 'trust work' in three different organisations, each of which has a demonstrated interest in the development of stakeholder trust. Trust work is defined in this thesis as the myriad of ways in which organisations and their multiple groups of diverse stakeholders act and interact to establish, develop, or maintain mutually supportive relationships. The concept of 'trust work' has been specifically chosen over 'trust talk' to account for the fact that the development of trust does not rely on trust being the topic of conversation. Indeed, the third study in this thesis, in Chapter 6, examines a case in which trust is evidently 'in play' in the organisation-stakeholder relationships under examination but is never explicitly mentioned.

Each study in the thesis examines trust work at a different stage of the organisation-stakeholder relationship, conceptualised as a trajectory, and involves a different stakeholder group. The first case study considers the initiation of trust in organisation-client relationships (Chapter 4). The

second case investigates how trust is being developed in manager-employee relationships through implementation of a specific trust-building strategy (Chapter 5) and the third study presents a case of accomplished trust in organisation-community stakeholder relationships (Chapter 6).

Given the centrality of stakeholder trust to each of the research sites, the objective of this research is not to provide a ‘snapshot’ (Lewicki *et al*, 2006) of trust in these organisations, but rather to provide ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz, 1973) that show how trust is conceptualised and how it is subsequently developed through both social and discursive practice. To facilitate this grounded research of trust at each of the sites, this thesis has incorporated prolonged ethnographic phases of investigation. These ethnographic phases have provided me, as researcher, with access to the conceptual world of the research participants as well as to the ‘professional stocks of interactional knowledge’ (Peräkylä & Vehviläinen, 2003) that have influenced the organisation’s trust work. To adequately account for relational trust at each site, the case studies are presented through the different perspectives offered in a multi-perspectival discourse analytic research framework (henceforth referred to as the MPF) which has been developed by Candlin (1997) Crichton (2003) Candlin (2006) Crichton (2010) Candlin & Crichton (2011) Candlin & Crichton (2013a) and Candlin & Crichton (2013b). The MPF, which is presented in Chapter 3, allows for the provision of responses to the following broad research questions which frame my overall research agenda:

- 1) How is trust conceptualized in different organisational contexts?
- 2) What contextual conditions are likely to facilitate the development of trust?
- 3) What social and discursive practices facilitate the development of relational trust?
- 4) In what ways is trust discursively displayed?

The remainder of this introductory chapter sets the scene for the three studies which follow in Part 2 of this thesis. In the following section (1.2), to make my own analytical perspectives visible, I describe my academic and professional background and my motivation for selecting trust as a focal research theme. Next, in section 1.3, I explain how the three research sites in this thesis were chosen and also provide a broad overview of the relational trust focus in each of the case studies. Chapter 1 concludes by presenting an outline of the thesis.

## **1.2 The analyst's perspective: researcher's background & motivations for trust research**

This trust research was borne out of more than fifteen years' experience working as a consultant in organisational and stakeholder communications to public and private sector organisations. This field of practice is generally referred to in industry and by its practitioners, as 'comms'. In my capacity working in comms, I have specialised in the design and implementation of a wide range of communication strategies that facilitate an organisation's engagement with its numerous different stakeholder groups. These groups have ranged from employees, clients and suppliers, to local residents, community interest groups and local government representatives. Most commonly, I have been attached to a Community Relations team working on infrastructure design and construction projects. These projects generally have a defined start and finish but often span several years. On the majority of projects on which I have worked, I have been responsible for community-based stakeholder engagement programs. These programs and stakeholder engagement in general, incorporate a wide variety of different communicative practices. These practices range from large-scale meetings, to focus groups, to individual face-to-face-meetings. With the increase in technology and social media, stakeholder engagement may also incorporate platforms such as Skype, Facebook and Twitter or online website chat rooms. Most of the projects on which I have worked have been linked to an organisation's corporate social responsibility (CSR) program. Stakeholder engagement has evolved to become an accepted area of organisational practice, in large part, because of its association with CSR. Yet CSR and stakeholder engagement remain an unregulated and voluntary field of practice for most organisations and this has a profound influence on the ability of organisations to develop stakeholder trust. The link between CSR and trust is specifically discussed in the first case study in this thesis which focuses on a sustainability assurance services provider; a specialised branch of CSR (see Chapter 4).

An additional driver of my trust research is the increasing frustration felt by stakeholder practitioners, which I have witnessed, as they attempt to professionalise this largely unregulated field of practice. The lack of recognition of this field has the effect that it is often categorised by the layperson as an adjunct to PR (Public Relations) or Marketing. There is as yet no recognised training path or formal qualification for stakeholder practitioners and this makes it increasingly difficult to separate the work that practitioners do from these other more readily recognisable occupations which similarly focus on organisational stakeholders and organisational communications.

The organisational stakeholder now occupies a different discursive space to that of former times. In regards to their stakeholder relationships, organisations are held to 'have travelled

linearly from the 'awareness era' in the mid-1980s, through the 'attentive era' in the early 1990s, to the 'engagement era' in the early 2000s (AccountAbility 2005a, p 17). This evolution is also reflected in the changing definition of the stakeholder practitioner function which has evolved from 'stakeholder management', to 'stakeholder communications', to 'stakeholder consultation', to 'stakeholder participation' and now to the more commonly used 'stakeholder engagement'. This changing categorisation, which is discussed by several organisational researchers (e.g. Arnstein, 1996; Wilcox, 1994; Roberts, 1995) is a reflection of a fundamental change that has taken place in organisation-stakeholder relationships as organisations have become increasingly relationally oriented.

The relational orientation is challenging for organisations as it removes them from a position in which they existed first and foremost to 'manage' stakeholders to one in which the focus is on 'engaging' with stakeholders. In discursive terms, this is a distinction between the uni-directional approaches to communication needed to 'manage' stakeholders, as opposed to the dialogic approach that is intrinsic to 'engagement' (Green & Hunton-Clarke, 2003). This discursive shift reflects a change in the type of relationships that organisations now need to develop with their stakeholders. Management of stakeholders requires little in terms of relationship building, whereas engagement with stakeholders is premised on concepts such as collaboration, reciprocity, consensus reaching and participant alignment. The term 'engagement' also implies an ongoing rather than a short-term relationship which can only occur if a relationship is founded upon trust.

A challenge for stakeholder practitioners is that 'engagement' is defined by organisations as a task-driven process rather than as an interpersonal practice. Assumptions of stakeholder trust underpin the design of engagement programs so that when stakeholder practitioners decide to hold a meeting, instead of organising a focus group with stakeholders, they are primarily concerned with the technical aspects of the meeting rather than with its potential to build stakeholder trust. Questions about how long the meeting will run, what will be on the agenda and who will attend the meeting, take precedence over a consideration of how these engagement practices might facilitate the development of mutually beneficial organisation-stakeholder relationships. In my experience, this focus on the impersonal rather than the interpersonal aspects of engagement constrains the opportunity to develop relational trust. A primary motivation for undertaking this research was my desire to better understand how organisations might develop trust with their diverse groups of stakeholders through particular social and discursive practices and how these practices might subsequently be integrated into processes of stakeholder engagement.

Also shaping this research is my academic background in Applied Linguistics. As a lecturer in 'Organisational Communication' and 'Corporate Sustainability', I see an increasing need to draw the connection between what is taught and learned in the classroom situation with what is experienced in the workplace. Equally, I see the day-to-day work of organisations, with which I work, as informing my academic practice. This mutually informing relationship is crucial, in my view, to achieving the 'ecological validity' of discourse analytic studies argued for by Cicourel (2007) (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.1) as well as to achieving practical outcomes for those who participate in, and may be affected by, research.

My professional and academic background has inevitably shaped how I have approached this research. In this thesis I am writing from the position of both analyst and practitioner. At times the thesis is written with the stakeholder practitioner in mind. In this case, the style of writing is more narrative and I switch to the first person to address the professional perspective. I see both my academic and professional roles as mutually informing and conducive to a research outcome that, in line with the approach of 'applied' research, is of both theoretical and 'practical relevance' (see also section 7.2). Where possible, my research orientation has been one of 'joint problematisation' (Roberts & Sarangi, 1999) and my specific research focus in a given site has been shaped in collaboration with research participants and in line with my own professional understanding of the needs of participants and practitioners. Studies 2 and 3 are examples of such an approach.

### **1.3 Selection of research sites**

The three organisations described in this thesis are, in my experience, rare. They were selected, as already mentioned, because they each had a demonstrated interest in trust and took explicit steps to develop trust-based relationships with their stakeholders. Thus all three of the research sites can be defined as having a relational orientation. As such, these organisations were likely to be able to offer opportunities to investigate trust work and provide naturally occurring trust data. Additionally, the relevant managers at these sites were all interested in developing a deeper understanding of their trust work and so were willing to grant research access. These organisations also meet the criteria that proponents of case study research suggest are necessary as they can be defined as 'special sites' (see Siggelkow, 2007) that are 'unusually revelatory, extreme exemplars or opportunities for unusual research access' (Yin, 2003, p. 260).

This research project was first conceived whilst I was working for the organisation referred to as Velcon (a pseudonym) in the third case study. Velcon is a construction consortium that was contracted for a large government-initiated and privately-funded infrastructure project in

Sydney, Australia. I worked with Velcon as a senior consultant in its Community Relations team for over four years. In this capacity my main role was to oversee one of five community liaison groups (henceforth referred to as CLGs) that were attached to the project. While in this role, one of the CLGs came to my attention as presenting particular difficulties to the Community Relations team member who was overseeing it. During its first eighteen months of meetings, this CLG experienced marked conflict and reached the point at which there was a strong possibility that the group would have to be disbanded. However, the group endured and by the end of its four-and-a-half year term, its members had forged close emotional bonds. The decision to focus on this particular CLG was therefore based on a view that it potentially offered the opportunity to investigate evidence of established trust.

The sites in Studies 1 and 2 were not organisations with which I was familiar prior to this research. Branhams (a pseudonym) came to my attention when I attended several presentations by its Director where he described Branhams as 'being in the trust business'. I was interested in exploring why the Director chose to describe his organisation in this way and what this might mean in practice. I subsequently contacted the Director to ask him if he would be interested in being involved in this research project and he agreed.

Branhams is a newly established organisation working in the relatively new professional field of sustainability assurance and associated services. Explanation of what this work entails is provided in the first case study (Chapter 4, section 4.3). At the time of data collection, Branhams' aim was to develop a sustainable client base. Its main trust work was the practices through which it was attempting to forge trust-based relationships with potential clients. This included the submission of written proposals to these clients and the focus of this study is discursive analysis of the trust-initiating features of three of the proposals that Branhams submitted. Each of the proposals examined eventuated in a contact for work for Branhams which suggests that this genre might play a part in laying the foundations for trusting organisation-client relationships.

The second case study centres on Gunz Dental, an SME (small to medium sized enterprise) that is at present directly and overtly addressing trust by implementing a trust-building strategy (referred to henceforth as the TBS). Gunz was brought to my attention by a professional colleague who knew of my interest in trust and was familiar with Gunz's trust strategy. The underlying aim of the TBS was to drive cultural change across the organisation and thereby increase profit. In its first phase, the TBS was aimed at strengthening manager and employee accountability and strengthening trust between managers and employees at Gunz. When I first approached Gunz it was concerned that the TBS, after an initial positive start, was faltering and

failing to meet its aims. Gunz was interested in having my input as to why this might be the case and in what, if any light, a discourse analytic approach might be able to shed light on this problem.

## **1.4 Outline of thesis**

The remainder of this thesis is organised as follows:

**Chapter 2** presents an overview of trust theory and describes how relational trust is conceptualised in this research. The chapter argues for trust to be understood in this research as a phenomenon that is multi-faceted, multiply-influenced and co-constructed.

**Chapter 3** presents the multi-perspectival discourse analytic research framework (MPF) which provides the principles that have shaped my research approach in this thesis. This innovative approach, which I detail in Chapter 3, allows for examination of data from analyst, participant, socio-historical, and institutional perspectives as well as for examination of organisational practices and interactions. Chapter 3 also explains the discourse analytic methodologies that have been drawn upon in the three case studies. An overview of the overall research approach that was instituted at each of the research sites and the data sets that were drawn upon in each case are also presented in this chapter.

## **Thesis Part 2: Three case studies**

**Chapters 4, 5 and 6** each present a separate case study. A brief overview of the trust orientation of each of the studies is provided below.

### **Preface to case studies**

The preface to the case studies makes some general points about how each study is presented and how the three studies cohere.

### **Chapter 4 Case study 1: Initiating trust in organisation-client relationships**

The first case study analyses how proposals for work are discursively constructed to lay the foundations for trusting organisation-client relationships. This study is thus an examination of the initial stages of relational trust.

### **Chapter 5 Case study 2: Trust work: a strategy for building stakeholder trust?**

The second case study analyses the trust work that is being undertaken in line with Gunz Dental's TBS. In particular, it examines how, as a consequence of the discourses and practices associated with the TBS, both trust and distrust were found to co-exist in employee-manager relationships. There is evidence in this study that, prior to implementation of the TBS, there was already trust in employee-manager relationships. Hence, this study is focussed on a more developed stage of trust than is the first study.

### **Chapter 6 Case study 3: A case of established trust in Community Relations**

The third case study provides analysis of a community liaison group (CLG) that had been meeting regularly for over four-and-a-half years. In this case, trust has been established and the central focus of this study is on how trust is interactionally displayed by CLG members in their meetings.

### **Thesis Part 3: General conclusions and practical relevance**

**Chapter 7:** Chapter 7 draws the findings from the three studies together and suggests ways in which organisations and practitioners might use these to assess and develop their own trust-building strategies.

## Chapter 2: Conceptualising relational trust, ontological perspectives

‘Trust is a peculiar resource; it is built rather than depleted by use’ – Unknown

(Accessed from Burgess & Burgess (Eds.)

### 2.1 Overview of chapter

This chapter critically examines current theories of trust and presents an overview of research that employs or complements a discursive approach to its investigation. The outcome of this chapter is a clarification of how relational trust is to be understood in this thesis and a broad understanding of how one might approach its analysis. The chapter serves to highlight the fact that trust is an extremely multi-faceted construct which, in spite of the attempts of researchers from many different disciplines to define it, e.g. psychology, business, management, environmental studies and the social sciences, has defied clear definition. Indeed, the very quest to define trust has arguably been one of the biggest downfalls of trust research. As Young (1993) notes, definitions of trust are of limited use because they are mainly concerned with cataloguing characteristics associated with the presence of trust and/or generating trust in order access its benefits. This is the equivalent in Parkhe's terms of having the 'ingredients for trust' without understanding the 'recipe' (see Parkhe, 1993). Although this chapter discusses different definitions of trust which have informed trust research, its overall aim is not to provide another definition of trust but rather to offer a conceptual trust framework against which trust, as enabled and enacted by people operating in different organisational situations, might be understood. The MPF, which is presented in Chapter 3, provides the means through which this might occur as it allows for trust to be addressed in context; through the historical and social conditions that shape workplace relationships, as well as through the eyes of participants involved in these relationships. In light of the MPF approach and the trust literature discussed in this chapter, trust is to be understood in this research as a phenomenon that is multi-faceted, multiply-influenced and co-constructed.

The chapter is organised as follows. Section 2.2 provides a general introduction to trust. Following this in sections 2.3-2.5, I examine trust research that has addressed the ways in which trust, and specifically relational trust, might be enabled and developed in organisations. This leads into an overview of research that takes a discursive orientation to relationship building and lays the foundation for the multi-perspectival discourse analytic approach taken in this research.

As the three studies address trust in the context of organisational relationships, research that is of relevance in this context has been selected for the most detailed consideration. Additionally, I

should point out that although trust and distrust are often linked, it is not within the scope of this thesis to consider the literature on distrust in detail.

## **2.2 Introduction to trust**

The study of trust as it relates to organisations is of increasing interest to both business and academic communities. Influential work by Putnam in 1995 [2000], which proposed that trust is a critical factor in explaining the origins of civic engagement, was followed up by Francis Fukuyama (1996), who examined trust as a necessity for the smooth functioning of society. Subsequent works emanating from the Social and Political sciences by Markova *et al* (2003) Hardin (2006) Solomon & Flores (2001) and from Business and Management Studies by Kramer & Tyler (1996) Kramer & Cook (2004) Saunders *et al* (2010) Lane & Bachmann (1998) have further examined the role that trust plays within and across social, political and organisational spheres.

Several special editions of journals have been dedicated wholly or in part to trust as it relates to organisations. See for example:

- Academy of Management review (1998, vol 23, 3) 2003
- Harvard Business Review (June 2009)
- Organization Science (2003, vol 14, Jan-Feb)
- Current Sociology (2006, vol 54, 4)
- Organization Studies (2001)
- International Journal of Human Resource Management (2003, vol 14, 1)
- Personnel Review 2006 – Trust, conflict and cooperative behaviour (vol 35, issue 5)
- Journal of Business Research 2010 – Trust and reciprocity (vol 63, 9-10).

These publications have broadly examined trust from three different perspectives: the potential for trust to reduce transaction costs in organisations, the role that trust plays in sustaining relationships within organisations and the role that trust plays in the creation of organisational authority. These perspectives, and research into organisational trust in general, are informed by different disciplinary frameworks which include both theoretical and applied approaches.

Drawn upon in this chapter and the thesis as a whole, are studies from various sub-disciplines of the humanities and social sciences (including sociology, psychology, communication studies, applied linguistics, genre theory, and discourse analysis) and from sub-disciplines of organisational studies (including organisational behaviour, organisational communication,

systems theory, human resource management, organisational psychology, business systems and quality assurance).

Overall, the research literature that has been drawn upon for this thesis has contributed to a view that trust constitutes an 'important resource' within social and organisational systems (Kramer & Cook, 2004, p. 1) but that establishing and sustaining it can be problematic. This literature also supports the need for more empirical approaches to trust research which can address issues of trust *in situ* and thus invites contributions from discourse practitioners.

### **2.3 Types of trust-based relationships within organisations**

A number of studies have differentiated between trust as it relates to exchange relationships, also referred to as 'transactional relationships' (see for example, Kreps, 1990; Sable, 1993; Ashraf *et al*, 2006) and relational trust. Transactional relationships are task oriented and commonly underpinned by the anticipation of a successful exchange of goods and/or services. The type of trust that underpins these transactional relationships is believed to differ from that which supports interpersonal relationships. This is reflected in organisational and management theory and practice where the clear distinction is made between transactionally and relationally oriented practices. This distinction is evidenced in the common use of the oppositional terms: 'transactional marketing' versus 'relational marketing' (Fruchter & Sique, 2005) 'transactional relationships' versus 'collaborative relationships' (Smith Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Backhaus & Buschkern, 1997; Easton, 1997; Bundichi, 2005) 'market transactions' versus 'value creating exchanges' (Hillman & Keim, 2000) and 'transactions' versus 'relationships' (Fruchter & Sique, 2005). Embedded in the term 'transactional' in most of these examples is the notion of an exchange taking place between two or more parties and an implicit link to economic outcomes. This differs from relationally oriented exchanges which are primarily socially motivated. This is not to disregard the economic underpinning of the majority of organisationally based relationships but rather to highlight that an organisation's primary motivation in developing relationships with its various stakeholders may differ.

It is worth noting at this point that this distinction is similarly reflected in studies of workplace discourse which draw a broad distinction between the transactional and relational functions of talk (see Drew & Heritage, 1992; Holmes, 2000; Holmes 2005). Here transactionally oriented talk, or 'business talk', is task oriented and 'aimed at furthering the objectives of the organisation' (Holmes, 2005, p. 671). In contrast, relational talk is socially oriented and aimed at cultivating workplace friendships and collegiality. The outcome is that in trust research there is an inference that there is a transactionally based form of trust which is evident in

relationships that are intrinsically motivated by the exchange of goods and/or services (Fruchter & Sique, 2005). These types of transactionally oriented relationships have also been referred to as ‘arms-length’ relationships (Bunduchi, 2005; Lewicki *et al*, 2006) or ‘exchange’ relationships’ (Dirks & Ferrin 2001; Dyer & Chu, 2003). They typically require short-term commitment, low levels of interdependency and are contractually bound. Importantly, the existence of a contract between parties is seen as alleviating the need for participants to develop relationships based on deeper levels of trust (Greenwood, 2001).

Much of the trust research that examines trust in transactional relationships has emanated from the behavioural tradition and supports the claim that trust is the outcome of a rational, or calculative, decision to trust (or not). This tradition subscribes to the view that trust is based on self-interested or opportunistic behaviour which is both observable (see Williamson, 1981; Hardin, 1993; Lewicki *et al*, 2006) and quantifiable in terms of the amount of risk and consequent vulnerability that participants to exchanges are prepared to accept (see Deutsch, 1958,1960; Sabel, 1993; Mayer *et al*, 1995; Hosmer, 1995). Behavioural-based trust research has had a tendency to examine trust in the context of highly controlled, mixed-motive games (see Deutsch & Kraus, 1960; Axelrod, 1984; Rachels, 1985; Donaldson, 1989; Ashraf *et al*, 2006) or in specifically economic-focussed games (see Kreps, 1990; Dasgupta, 1988). These ‘game theory’ experiments have favoured simulated experimental environments where there has been minimal opportunity for interaction between participants and where trust equates to a quantifiable amount of risk or vulnerability (see Deutsch, 1958; Arrow, 1974; Gambetta, 1988; Zucker, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Anderson & Narus, 1990; Morgan, 1999). A further issue with game theory research is that it is generally staged and can only ever be what Lewicki *et al* (2006) refer to as a short term, or ‘snapshot’, view of trust. Such a research perspective results in trust being defined as an impersonal construct and as being measurable at a specific point in time.

## **2.4 Rational forms of trust**

Supporting the behavioural view of trust is research that examines ‘calculus-based trust’ (see Lewicki & Bunker, 1995, 1996; Lewicki *et al*, 2006; Rousseau *et al*, 1998). Calculus-based trust is defined as follows:

[Trust is] based on rational choice – characteristic of interactions based on economic exchanges. Trust emerges when the trustor perceives that the trustee intends to perform an action that is beneficial. The perceived positive intentions in *calculus-based trust* derive not only from the existence of deterrence but also because of credible information regarding the intentions or competence of another (Barber, 1983). For instance, credible information about the trustee may be provided by others (reputation) or by certification (e.g. a diploma).

Calculus-based trust is devoid of emotion and relies for its existence on forms of external validation such as qualifications or organisational reputation. The view that trust is an impersonal phenomenon is also reflected in the notions of 'organizational trust' (Nooderhaven, 1992; 1995) 'institution based trust' (Rousseau *et al*, 1998) and 'system trust' (Luhmann, 1979; McKnight *et al*, 1998; Pennington *et al*, 2003) and is a prime focus of the first case study. In each of these trust types, trust is inherently part of an organisation rather than something which emanates from its personnel. In other words, trust is viewed as a confidence in the 'institutional order' (Berger & Luckman, 1966) and in the supposition that, as Di Luzio (2006) contends, institutional systems work in professional and predictable ways and not as a consequence of the interpersonal trust that may exist between the professional, the practitioner and their client(s).

Some scholars argue that system, or institution-based, trust is a necessary pre-requisite for relational trust (Rousseau *et al*, 1998; Gulati, 1995; Sitkin, 1995). Additionally, several studies that set out to examine relational trust in work-based teams conclude that the form of trust most in evidence in this context is in fact an impersonal or institution-based form of trust. Costa's (2003) study of the relationship between team trust and effectiveness concludes that trust is strongly related to team members' attitudes towards the organisation rather than to each other. Koskinen & Pihlanto's (2007) study of relationships between project team members suggests that trust is based on a confidence in the ability of team members to adequately perform their team roles, or 'role based trust' (Koskinen & Pihlanto, 2007, p. 78) rather than on interpersonal considerations. They conclude that as project teams are often temporary, there is little time for members to develop deeper forms of trust and consequently these relationships exhibit features of shared participant knowledge rather than an emotional connection (see also Gulati, 1995).

## **2.5 The characteristics of relational forms of Trust**

A number of trust characteristics are held to typify different forms of relational trust. Whereas behavioural approaches to trust 'fast forward' to observable behaviour and presume this to be an outcome of rational thinking, psychological approaches to trust, according to Mayer *et al* (1995) and Lewicki *et al* (2006), consider the causes of behaviour and link it particularly to beliefs, expectations and affect. Psychological approaches consequently propose that although trust is a single 'super-ordinate' factor in relationships, it is multi-faceted and has, as Cummings & Bromiley (1996) and Lewicki *et al* (2006) suggest, behavioural, cognitive and affective intention 'sub-factors'. These sub-factors may operate independently or inter-dependently and have the potential to shape both trust and distrust in different ways. For example, it is held that

behavioural views of trust which incorporate a rational decision to trust or not, (see section 2.4) are based on the 'behavioural or behavioural intention sub-factor'. If operating in isolation, the behavioural intention sub-factor is likely to result in what Lewicki *et al* (2006, p.1004) propose are the 'weaker' forms of trust that underpin short-term relationships. The cognitive sub-factor is held responsible for the ways in which parties are able to evaluate and assess the potential of relationships based on those life experiences, values and beliefs which they take to constitute evidence of trustworthiness (Lewicki *et al*, 2006, p. 997). The affective, or psychological, sub-factor is based on emotional judgements and becomes most evident in what Barney and Hansen (1994) refer to as deeper or 'strong form trust' such as identification-based trust (IBT). Although trust is associated with emotions it is not, in itself, held by trust theorists (e.g. Solomon & Flores, 2001; Lewicki *et al*, 2006) to be an emotion (see also section 2.5.4).

The significance of theorising that trust has different sub-factors is that it provides a means of explaining the myriad of ways in which relational trust might be characterised, operationalised, or potentially measured. Although this conceptualisation of trust supports the contention that trust is complex and multi-faceted, it would appear that much more empirical work is needed to support and validate different representations of trust and distrust, a view which is espoused by, amongst others, Candlin & Crichton (2013a) Lewicki *et al* (2006) and Gillespie (2003).

Another way of distinguishing relational from transactional forms of trust is to emphasis its focal object. Transactionally oriented trust is oriented to the outcome of a transaction while in relational trust the focus is on the relationship that supports the transaction. Relational trust is evident when steps are taken to cultivate friendships, closeness, interdependencies, as well as trust itself (for more on this see Smith Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Backhaus & Buschken, 1997; Easton, 1997; Bunduchi, 2005). Relational trust thus places the emphasis on the interpersonal. This is indicated by research that refers to relational trust as 'personal trust' (Bunduchi, 2005) 'interpersonal trust' (Lewicki *et al*, 2006) and 'affective trust' (McAllister, 1995; Rousseau *et al*, 1998).

It is worth noting that much of the research on trust in relationships has been in the context of informal social relationships and friendships. These studies have generally focussed on one-on-one relationships between couples, or close friends, that display love, affection and/or mutual happiness (e.g. Driscoll *et al*, 1972; Rempel *et al*, 1985). Clearly, this context differs from that of the organisation where the main purpose of a relationship is unlikely to be for companionship or love. The relationships examined in the three studies in this thesis exhibit several distinct differences from relationships which have been developed as a consequence of social contact.

The first difference is that the trust relationships in this research are organisation, team, or group based: between the client and the organisation in the first study, between managers and employees in the second study and between employees and community members in the third study. Secondly, even when these relationships are more socially oriented and affectively based, as in the second study, the context in which the relationship has been built means that it differs from a purely social relationship. The purposeful nature of the workplace means that relationships engendered in this context are generally centred on the collaborative achievement of specified organisational goals. The basis of these relationships is thus quite different to that of close friends or lovers who have consciously selected with whom they will pursue friendships and whose choice of partners is, as a result, most often affectively based. One cannot always choose those with whom one works or with whom one might need to form a working relationship. Neither can one assume that workplace-based relationships are based on affective factors: it is certainly not obligatory, for example, to like one's work colleagues even though doing so probably results in a more satisfying workplace experience.

In spite of these differences, studies that examine trust in close social relationships provide some useful insights into the critical elements of trust that appear to be required for close relationships to develop in both social and workplace contexts. Amongst these are the notions of interdependency and dependability both of which are important in shifting the focus of a relationship away from assessments of specific behaviours to the qualities and characteristics that are attributed to relationship participants (Rempel et al, 1985, p. 96). In this way, trust becomes placed in the person rather than in their actions and becomes a matter of 'faith'. It is this faith that, according to Rempel *et al* (1985), reflects the emotional security of relationship participants and 'enables them to go beyond the available evidence and feel, with assurance, that their partner will be responsive and caring, despite the vicissitudes of an uncertain future' (Rempel et al, 1985, p. 97). Of course, in the organisational context the notion of 'caring' is often extrinsically motivated by the legislative need for organisations to look after their personnel. This differs markedly from close friendships in which participants derive intrinsic reward from being responsive and empathetic to each other's needs to the point where the happiness derived from friendship becomes part of the individual's own reward system.

A further insight provided by research into trust in close relationships concerns the ways in which trust evolves through mutually satisfying interactions. This not only supports the view that trust is discursively mediated (see Solomon & Flores, 2001; Candlin & Crichton, 2013a; Jackson, 2013) but also suggests that in researching trust there is a need to examine the characteristics, or one might say, the 'quality' of interactions. This view is discussed further in section 2.7.

Finally, research into trust in close friendships strongly supports the view that it is only really possible to develop interpersonal trust gradually over time (Rempel *et al*, 1985; Solomon & Flores, 2001). This proposition would suggest that the notion of 'love at first sight' cannot, in reality, be trust based. Further, the time needed for interpersonal trust to develop makes research into this form of trust in organisational relationships somewhat problematic as it is likely to require a relatively lengthy time commitment from both the organisation and researcher in order to yield results.

The assertion that trust is discursively mediated centres on the role of interpersonal interactions, actions and shared experiences in establishing developing and maintaining trust. Dervitsiotis (2006) sums this up succinctly when he comments that 'Developing trust in a relationship is an organic process taking place over time from a series of repeated interactions' (Dervitsiotis, 2006, p. 798). Solomon and Flores also note that, 'People do not develop trust by forming affective attitudes or beliefs *about* another person. They develop trust through interaction and conversation in relationships *with* each other' (Solomon & Flores, 2001, p. 96).

One of the most influential attempts to address relational trust in the context of organisational relationships is Mayer *et al*'s (1995) 'Integrative Model of Organizational Trust'. This model is one of the few that considers both the trustor and trustee in organisational relationships. Mayer *et al* focus on the conditions required for trust and argue that a perception of trustee 'ability', 'benevolence' and 'integrity' are necessary pre-requisites for trust to develop. Importantly, Mayer *et al*'s (1995) model does not propose that all three of these factors must be present for trust to develop but suggests that 'ability, benevolence and integrity are important to trust' and that each of these factors 'may vary independently of the other' (Mayer *et al*, 1995, p. 720). As Mayer *et al* further point out, this is not to suggest that these factors are unrelated but merely that they are separable. Additionally, it is not just a perception of these factors that will ultimately lead to trust but rather the type of continuing evidence of their existence which can be gleaned through parties' shared experiences and interactions. Mayer *et al*'s model provides a useful means of addressing issues of trust and distrust in the second case study which is focussed on an examination of the development of trust between staff within an organisation.

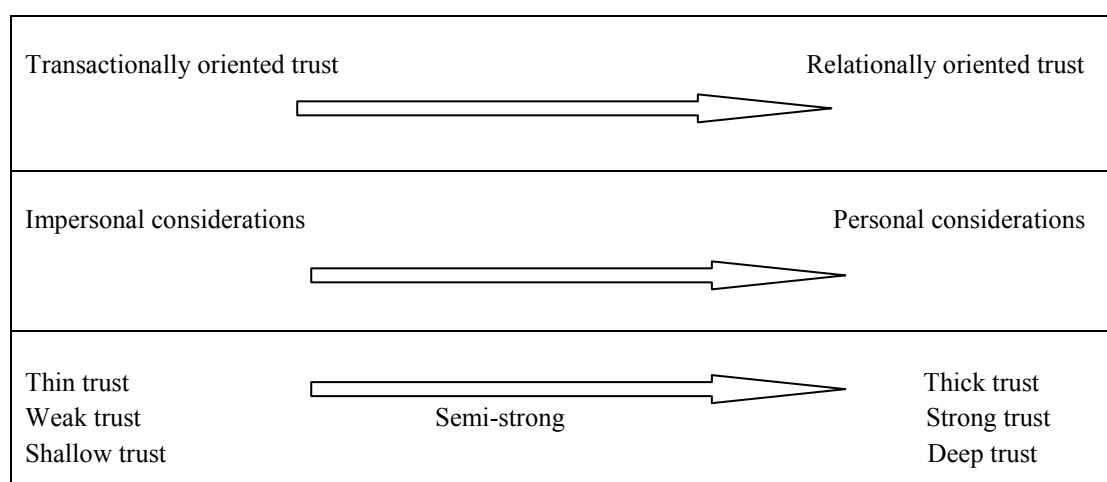
A further view of trust that receives support from Mayer *et al*'s model (2005) and across trust research in general, is that trust is a developmental construct. There are two main schools of thought in this regard. The first, supported by, amongst others, Barney & Hansen (1994) suggests that trust develops along a continuum from 'weak' to 'strong' or 'low' to 'high'. The second, suggests that trust is transformational and that the nature of trust itself changes over time (e.g. Lewicki *et al*, 2006; Shapiro *et al*, 1992). These two perspectives are significant to

this research, the aim of which is to understand sustainable forms of relational trust and to investigate how these might be effectively developed to support mutually beneficial organisation-stakeholder relationships.

### 2.5.1 The developmental view of relational trust

A number of trust researchers have suggested that trust typically develops through stages and has a distinct ‘life cycle’ which includes building, maintaining and destroying trust (Fachrunnisa *et al*, 2010). Others suggest that trust follows a typical trajectory evolving from ‘thin trust’ to ‘thick trust’ (Weibel & Osterloh, 2001), from ‘shallow trust’ to ‘deep trust’ (Kriz & Keating, 2010) or from ‘weak form’ to ‘semi-strong form’ to ‘strong form’ trust (Barney & Hansen, 1994). One might usefully conceive of these theories as constituting a trust continuum at one end of which is trust that is transactionally oriented and at the other end is trust that is relationally oriented. Further, this continuum is likely to reflect a transition from impersonal to personal forms of trust or from weak to strong form trust (see Figure 2.1).

Although Figure 2.1 depicts trust as following a typical trajectory along which trust is continually strengthening, it should be noted that trust is not so clear-cut. There is the potential for trust to decrease or for different forms of trust to exist simultaneously (see section 2.5.3).



**Figure 2.1: A continuum of relational trust**

### 2.5.2 The transformational view of relational trust

A further approach to trust, which is generally credited to the field of social psychology, suggests that trust is dynamic and transformational. This social-psychological approach

proposes that there are different forms of trust and that the nature of trust itself transforms over time (e.g. Luhmann, 1979; Salmond, 1994; Magrath & Hardy, 1989; Blomqvist, 2007; Lewicki *et al*, 2006). For example, trust may evolve from ‘simple’ to ‘authentic’ trust (Solomon & Flores, 2001) from ‘deterrence based’ to ‘knowledge based’ to ‘identification based’ trust (Shapiro *et al*, 1992; Koskinen & Pihlanto, 2003; Lewicki *et al*, 2006) or from ‘calculative’ to ‘relational’ trust (Rousseau *et al*, 1998).

Attempts to define different types of trust generally emerge from research which has investigated whether organisationally based relationships transform from transactional to relational and whether there is a phenomenological difference between transactional trust and the deeper trust of close relationships (see Lewicki & Bunker, 1995, 1996; Lewicki *et al*, 2006; Shapiro *et al*, 1992; Rousseau *et al*, 1998). Several researchers have attempted to define different types of relationally based trust and explain its transformation from one trust type to another. Research by Lewicki *et al* (2006) Rousseau *et al* (1998) and Koskinen & Pihlanto (2007) is useful in this regard.

Table 2.1 presents an overview of findings from these three sources. It provides definitions of three of the most commonly referenced forms of trust and describes the factors that are likely to be implicated as they transform. It should be noted that although the table includes the category of deterrence-based trust (DBT), Rousseau *et al* (1998), amongst others, argue that DBT cannot be categorised as a form of trust because it promotes coercion rather than co-operation and thus is inherently oppositional to the innate character of trust.

Table 2.1 not only demonstrates the complexity in attempting to define trust but also shows that people conceptualise trust in different ways dependent upon its foundations and how it is communicated. DBT, or calculus-based trust, arises from parties weighing up the pros and cons of their behaviour in relationships. KBT results from a shared knowledge base and IBT arises when there is an emotional bond.

Table 2.1 also supports the proposition that the transformation of trust occurs as a consequence of repeated interactions and experiences with other parties. What is implied by these definitions, however, is that the quality of these practices might differ. The ‘courtship’ required to strengthen KBT is likely to display very different characteristics from the ‘repeated’ or ‘multi-faceted interactions’ required to strengthen DBT. This suggests that different types of interactions and conversations are likely to be taking place in association with different forms of trust. Supporting this proposition is the implication that the purpose of the ‘courtship’ is to furnish participants with enough information and knowledge from which to verify points of alignment or their ‘interpersonal fit’, whereas the purpose in DBT is to ensure trust stability.

Further, the discursive practices implicated in this transformational view of trust appear to have both intrinsic and extrinsic value. Intrinsically, they are an important vehicle for sharing information. Extrinsically, they furnish participants with experientially based knowledge from which parties learn to predict each other's behaviours, form close alignments and create emotional bonds. Table 2.1 also implies that relationships of trust, and especially relationships based on what are characterised as deeper and more sustainable forms of trust such as KBT and IBT, are inherently reflexive. These forms of trust consequently rely for their continual enhancement on the positive evaluations that parties make as they acquire more knowledge of each other and share more experiences.

**Table 2.1: Comparison of three of the main trust types found in organisational – trust research**

<b>Form of trust</b>	<b><i>Deterrence-based trust (DBT)</i></b>	<b><i>Knowledge-based trust (KBT)</i></b>	<b><i>Identification-based trust (IBT)</i></b>
<b>Definition</b>	<p>DBT is a fragile form of trust that is often compared to calculus-based trust (section 2.4).</p> <p>DBT exists when the potential costs of discontinuing the relationship, or the likelihood of retributive actions, outweigh the short-term advantage of acting in a distrustful way.</p> <p>DBT is based on fear of reprisal if trust is violated.</p> <p>DBT only works if punishment is possible, consequences are clear and there is evidence that punishment will actually be imposed (Koskinen &amp; Pihlanto, 2007).</p>	<p>KBT is the most common form of trust in organisational relationships. It is based on behavioural predictability gained from a history of interaction.</p> <p>KBT exists when ‘an individual has adequate information about someone, to understand him or her well enough to be able to predict considerably accurately his or her behaviour’ (Koskinen &amp; Pihlanto, 2007, p. 75).</p>	<p>IBT is the rarest form of trust in organisational relationships. It relies on identification with the other party’s desires and intentions.</p> <p>IBT develops as parties create joint products and goals, take on a common name, are collocated in close proximity and share common values (Lewicki <i>et al</i> 2006, p. 1009).</p> <p>If IBT is present, parties understand each other’s intentions, &amp; empathise with each other’s wants &amp; desires so completely, that each is able to act as ‘agent’ for the other (Koskinen &amp; Pihlanto, 2007, p.79).</p>
<b>Transformational factors</b>	<p>DBT can be strengthened in 3 ways,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) repeated interactions (enhancing the benefits of the relationship over time by enhancing each party’s ability to know &amp; predict the other’s behaviour)</li> <li>2) multi-faceted interactions (enhancing the likelihood of trust stability by increasing the number of ‘points of interaction’ between parties)</li> <li>3) ‘reputation as hostage’ (threatening the potential trust breaker with reputation damage within his or her professional network if trust is broken).</li> </ol> <p>(Lewicki <i>et al</i>, 2006)</p>	<p>KBT is enhanced by regular communication and ‘courtship’, i.e. getting to know the other, learning a great deal about the other’s reputation, reliability, integrity, and determining the ‘interpersonal fit’ between self and others (Lewicki <i>et al</i> 2006, p. 1009).</p>	<p>IBT is strengthened as shared activities increase in frequency and intensity. (Lewicki <i>et al</i>. 2006, p. 1009)</p>

### 2.5.3 Two-dimensional views of relational trust

Two-dimensional approaches to trust, as discussed in Lewicki *et al* (2006), take account of the fact that interpersonal relationships are complex and have the capacity to be simultaneously trusting and distrusting. Two-dimensional models of trust treat trust and distrust as distinct phenomenon so that low trust is not the equivalent of high distrust and high trust is not the equivalent of low distrust. In two-dimensional models trust and distrust are seen as distinct constructs and are addressed separately. The outcome of this approach is, according to Lewicki *et al* (2006), that assessments of trust need to be qualified. For example, a manager may trust an employee to represent his organisation effectively to potential customers but not to get his monthly reports written on time. In this case, if the manager were to be asked 'do you trust this employee?' it would be difficult for him to provide a direct response. Lewicki *et al* (2006) explain that the concurrence of trust and distrust eventuates because:

Within relationships, reasons for trust and distrust accumulate as interactions with the other person provide more breadth (i.e. cross more facets of a relationship) and/or more depth (richness within a facet)... When asked whether one trusts or distrusts another, the proper answer is not "yes" or "no" but "to do what?"

(Lewicki *et al*, 2006, p. 1003).

This phenomenon, described by Lewicki *et al* (2006) as trust having 'broad bandwidth', is relevant to the workplace setting in which relationships are subject to many variables such as the context and purpose of the relationship. Further, even within relationships, trust is subject to change, depending on the referent facets of the relationship, so that different levels of trust may be claimed at different times in relationships (Lewicki *et al* 2006). This in turn reflects the proposition that trust is, as Blomqvist (1997) and Bhattacharya *et al* (1998) contend, context, person and situation specific and can never be a case of 'one-size-fits-all'.

### 2.5.4 The emotional base of relational trust

Emotion plays a significant role in the forms of trust that are held to be most sustainable such as identification-based trust (IBT) (see Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Rousseau *et al*, 1998). This emotional element is held to be responsible for participants' abilities to relate to each other in ways that are mutually beneficial. Although supportive of an emotional element in trust, some trust researchers argue that trust is not itself an emotion (e.g. Rempel *et al*, 1998) but rather an emotional skill. Trust is not something that we feel, as we do love, but rather is considered to be part of the ongoing experience of a relationship. Typifying this view, Solomon and Flores propose that:

Trust is not a *feeling*. And yet, because it so clearly evokes a range of emotions, moods and affections, we may think of trust as a feeling, a barely detectable state of mind, a calm sense of comfort, a soft affection. But there is no feeling of trust as such, and reducing trust to a feeling ignores the interactive and dynamic aspects of trust in favor of a more or less passive ‘intuition’ ... trust itself is not a distinctive feature of our phenomenal (feeling) life. Nevertheless, trust is inextricably involved with our emotions and moods.

(Solomon & Flores, 2001, p. 58).

The emotional element in trust is held to provide emotional security within a relationship and is, in part, responsible for providing confidence and a feeling of alignment and mutuality with the other party (Rempel *et al*, 1998). How emotional alignment and mutuality is discursively evidenced is the main focus of the third study in this thesis.

Research by Cummings & Bromiley (1996) and Clark & Payne (1997) which has tried to distinguish the emotional (psychological) sub-factor in trust from the cognitive sub-factor (see section 2.5) has been unable to do so. However, the same research concludes that a participant’s behavioural intentions and thus the behavioural sub-factor is distinct and is, in fact, distinguishable in relationships from cognitive and affective sub-factors.

## **2.6 The starting point of trust**

Several strands of research have attempted to ascertain a ‘starting point’ for the development of relational trust. These are important to understanding the drivers of relational trust and thus how it might be enabled by organisations. Theories fall into two main categories. The first suggests that the basis of relational trust is a calculative one and the second that trust evolves from a basis of goodwill.

### **2.6.1 Calculative trust as the starting point for relational trust**

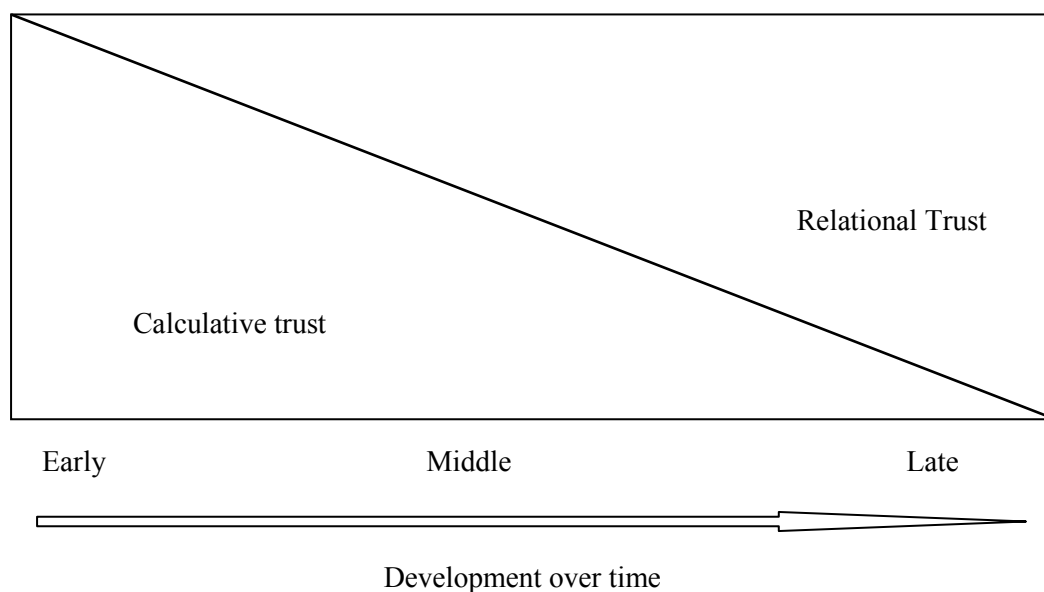
Several trust theorists have suggested that relational trust starts out as calculative processes such as is found in calculus-based trust (see Rousseau *et al*, 1998). This theory sits well in the context of organisations that are primarily geared towards strategic management and the minimisation of risk because it presupposes that the start of trust is rationally based. Rousseau *et al* (1998) further suggest that as relationships develop, initial, calculative forms of trust decrease in proportion to the increase in relational trust (see Figure 2.2).

Relational trust is strengthened through repeated interactions. Most importantly, as repeated interactions occur, trust begins to develop from within the relationship itself rather than as a consequence of external factors. Rousseau *et al* (1998) sum this up when they suggest that:

Relational trust derives from repeated interactions over time between trustor and trustee. Information available to the trustor from *within the relationship itself* forms the basis of relational trust. Reliability and dependability in previous interactions with the trustor give rise to positive expectations about the trustee's intentions. Emotion enters into the relationship between parties, because frequent, longer-term interaction leads to the formation of attachments based upon reciprocated interpersonal care and concern.

(Rousseau *et al*, 1998, p. 399).

Relational trust in this definition becomes self-sufficient in that it is not reliant on external factors or calculative processes to strengthen it. As with other kinds of trust, relational trust is dependent for its existence and continuation on discursive practices. The implication here is that these practices change with time becoming both 'frequent' and 'longer term' and that, as a consequence of this, emotional attachment enters the relationship. The problem with this proposition is that this transformation appears to be predominantly dependent on frequency of interaction, suggesting that trust transforms because of interactional quantity rather than as a consequence of interactional quality.



**Figure 2.2 The relationship between calculative and relational trust**

### **2.6.2 Goodwill trust**

In contrast to the view that calculative trust represents the initial stage of trust are theories of 'goodwill' trust. A useful overview of the goodwill perspective on trust as it relates to 'Business Relationships' is provided by Bunduchi (2005). Trust research typically posits that whether it is transactionally or relationally based, trust is founded on the potential for distrust. Accordingly, trust is established on doubt and a willingness to take risk. This equates to parties in the initial stages of a relationship being prepared to place themselves in vulnerable positions in relation to the other party, a view which is examined by, amongst others, Mayer *et al* (1995, p. 172).

Theories of goodwill trust suggest that what differentiates stronger forms of trust such as KBT and IBT from weaker forms of trust such as DBT, calculative and transactional trust is that they counter the potential for distrust by basing the relationship on 'goodwill trust' or 'intentionality' (Miranda & Klement, 2009, p. 31). In fact, trust theorists such as Gambetta (1988) Deutsch (1962) and Kramer *et al* (1996) argue that goodwill trust is a pre-requisite for cooperative relationships and is an essential step in developing relational trust.

Goodwill trust has been defined by the philosopher Kant as, 'the only element of human behaviour that was good in and of itself and not merely a means to some particular goal' (Miranda & Klement, 2009, p. 31). If we accept this position, then goodwill trust cannot be calculative. This presents a potential challenge for organisations that are used to operating strategically and on the basis of pre-determining outcomes. Basing relationships on goodwill trust means that organisations will need to be prepared to take a 'leap of faith' (Lewis & Weigert, 1985, p. 971) in developing mutually beneficial organisation-stakeholder relationships and avoid attempts to strategically manage them. To clarify, relationships of trust, according to Smith Ring & Van de Ven (1994) and Bunduchi (2005) are only likely to develop if parties have confidence in the moral integrity of the other party not to take advantage of the relationship. If parties suspect that the relationship is being strategically managed, has pre-determined outcomes, or is being forged for the benefit of an organisation rather than from a genuine desire to attain mutually beneficial outcomes, then trust will be difficult to attain.

## **2.7 Discourse-based and associated research on relationships and trust**

There has been a scarcity of research that specifically focuses on the relationship between discourse and trust. An exception is the recent volume 'Discourses of Trust' edited by Candlin & Crichton (2013a) which investigates this link. Discourse-based research into the establishment of relationships in professional and organisational settings has implied rather than

explicitly focussed on trust. For example, research into humour (Rank, 1984; Kangasharju, 2009; Holmes, 2000a; Holmes, 2002; Holmes, 2007; Holmes & Marra, 2002), pronominal use and especially the use of ‘us’, ‘our’ and inclusive ‘we’ (Rank, 1984; Sutch, 1993), empathy (O’Grady, 2011; O’Grady & Candlin, 2013; Martinovski *et al*, 2007) and rapport building (O’Grady, 2011a; Thompson, 1992; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009) have all provided useful insights into some of the linguistic and pragmatic features that are implicated in the development of relational trust. Yet there remains a dearth of trust research that has empirically investigated how trust is discursively mediated *in situ*.

Sevin & Sevin’s (1989) study of rapport development between a gynaecological oncologist and his patients highlights the necessity for medical staff to create rapport as a precursor to trust with their patients in order to effectively perform their professional duties (see also O’Grady, 2011). Establishing rapport is held to be particularly important in cases where the professional is the bearer of bad news (see also Heritage & Maynard, 2006; O’Grady, 2011). Sevin & Sevin’s (1989) study notes that rapport is established through the inclusion of ‘elements of trust’ in interaction. These elements are defined as the use of ‘appropriate’ humour, being consistent in the information and messages that are imparted to patients and demonstrating cultural sensitivity. These elements are held to be important for building bridges and establishing what Cheney (1983) and Lee (2001) call ‘common ground’ between doctors and their patients. The findings of Sevin & Sevin’s (1989) study are useful for providing an overview of some of the features of interaction that may help in developing trust but are somewhat loosely defined and open to reader interpretation. Sevin and Sevin’s findings also raise questions as to whether the development of rapport is intuitive as well as whether participants, in this case medical staff, strategically choose to interact in a particular trust-engendering way when developing patient relationships.

Some socio-psychological and organisational communications-based studies promote particular models or orientations to workplace communications which are held to improve the effectiveness of workplace-based relationships. These studies do not address trust directly but rather infer trust as an outcome of particular modes of practice. Most prominent in this area is the work of Argyris (1984; 1990) who proposes that certain types of ‘open’ communication play a central role in the development of effective relationships. By ‘open’ Argyris means communicative practices that provide for the exploration of participants’ beliefs, feelings and attitudes and which, in Argyris’s view, allows interactions to proceed on the basis of ‘truth’ rather than assumption. Complementing Argyris’s approach, Clark and Myers (2007) promote the implementation of ‘open to learning conversations’ in managing difficult interactions at work. Their ‘open to learning model’ suggests that maintaining and enhancing relationships

with colleagues necessitates the questioning of assumptions, the promotion of partnerships and the exchange of all relevant information (Clark & Meyers, 2007, p. 33). In similar vein, Dervitsiotis (2000) proposes that organisations wishing to improve their overall performance should implement ‘conversations for action’ between staff. ‘Conversations for action’ are defined by Dervitsiotis (2006) as interactions which reflect ‘soft skills’, or which provide the ability to interpret the beliefs, values and human emotions that underpin human interaction. Dervitsiotis asserts that ‘soft skills’ are not as well developed in organisations as ‘hard skills’. Hard skills are characterised by a technical ability to interpret and evaluate data and criteria and are typically quantitatively oriented. Dervitsiotis also suggests that without ‘soft skills’ organisations will not have the capacity for the type of ‘high quality human interaction’ which can ‘create, sustain, and develop continually a climate of trust’ (2002, p. 1097). Interestingly, these ‘soft skills’ appear to equate to the operationalisation of the cognitive and psychological sub-factors discussed by Lewicki *et al* (2006) as being intrinsic to relational trust (see section 2.5).

Supporting a focus on the qualitative aspects of human interaction in trust building, Koskinen and Pihlanto in their exploration of ‘Trust in a project work context’ (2003), suggest that project teams with, what they define as, the highest levels of trust start their interactions with a ‘a series of social messages’ (Koskinen & Pihlanto, 2003, p. 87). These messages include personal introductions and provide team members with personal information prior to focussing on work (see also Henderson, 2003). However, the relevance of this to developing trust is not addressed in Koskinen & Pihlanto’s study so that the potential significance of this socially oriented talk to trust-development is open to reader interpretation. There is, nevertheless, an underlying inference that this socially oriented talk may potentially play a part in developing and/or indicating trust in these project team relationships. Consequently, this study appears to support the potential for the role of discourse, seen in this case as socially oriented language, to be worthy of further consideration in trust research.

Not all organisational-based communication research of relevance to this thesis has focussed on verbal interaction. Bentele & Seidenglanz (2008) examine a case of trust building with external ‘public’ stakeholders (the focus of the third study in this thesis). They suggest that trust can only be developed with public stakeholders if the actions and communications of participating organisations are viewed as congruent. Congruence in this context equates to organisations that speak consistently, act transparently, and are adaptive to the demands of their external stakeholders. The need for communicative congruence, although significant, is not limited to relationships with ‘external’ public stakeholders and is also held to be important for internal

organisational effectiveness (see also Phillips *et al*, 2004; Levin & Beherns, 2003) and for business and professional relationships in general (see Candlin, 2001).

Also revealing is Thomas *et al*'s (2009) research which claims a connection between trust and the form that organisational information takes. This case study investigates employees' perceptions of the organisational documentation that is provided to them in the workplace. The study finds a relationship between the quality of information provision, the quantity of information provision and trust. Based on a communications audit, Thomas *et al* (2009) propose that employee' perceptions of information quality, which is measured in terms of the timeliness, accuracy and usefulness of information, predicts trust in one's co-workers and supervisors. In contrast, adequacy of information predicts employee trust in higher levels of management. This finding suggests that information quality is important for developing trust with those with whom employees interact more frequently such as supervisors and line managers. However, what defines 'quality' is not explored in detail by Thomas *et al* and the study is further limited by being focussed on a single organisation. Nevertheless, the study is useful in raising a potential link between the form that organisational information takes and trust; a topic which is explored further in the first study in this thesis (Chapter 4).

Although this brief overview of discourse-oriented research into the development of organisation-stakeholder relationships is revealing, a much more precise interpretation of 'trust work' and its associated discourse(s) is necessary. Features which are implicated as significant for trust, for example, 'openness', 'transparency', 'rapport' and 'information quality' require much more precise explanation and interpretation if they are to be practically relevant to organisations seeking to develop trust work practices.

## **2.8 Conceptualising trust in this thesis**

The review of trust research contained in this chapter has clearly shown that it is possible to analyse trust from many different perspectives and to highlight different aspects or forms of trust. The three case studies in this thesis are each informed by different facets of trust that have been reviewed in this chapter. These facets, together with some of the more generally held beliefs about trust which have emerged from this review, provide the broad conceptual trust basis for this research. By way of foregrounding the discourse analytic research approach which I take in this thesis and which I outline in Chapter 3, the remainder of this section (2.8) presents the conceptualisation of trust that underpins this research.

In the introduction to this thesis, I noted that a general issue with trust research has been its determination to provide a single and universally applicable definition of trust. This present study breaks with this tradition by proposing that trust is ‘multi-interpretable’ (Candlin & Crichton, 2013a; Candlin & Crichton, 2013b) and is a construct that is only definable *in situ*. Additionally, as Blomqvist (1997) notes, trust is shaped by the specific social and interpersonal contexts in which relationships are formed. There is thus no rationale for seeking a universally held definition of trust which assumes it to be a singular self-evident entity that manifests and operates in the same way in all contexts. In light of this, the starting point of this research is the premise that people do not all conceive of trust in the same way. In selecting trust as a focal research theme the analyst therefore needs to remain open to identifying and explaining the way(s) in which trust is given functional meaning in specific settings. For this reason, I specifically avoid providing a definition of trust as the starting point for this research, but rather intend to investigate the different conceptualisations that participants bring to bear on issues of trust in the research sites investigated in this thesis.

A further consideration in approaching this trust research is to take account of the macro-social context in which trust is being developed. The focus on developing organisation-stakeholder relationships at each of the three research sites makes a relationally oriented view of trust inevitable. This relational view also assumes trust to be the outcome of a process that is discursively mediated. To elaborate, whether and how trust develops in relationships is seen in this research to be reliant, as Rousseau *et al* (1998) and Solomon & Flores (2001) also suggest, on parties’ evaluations of each other’s actions and interactions over time. These evaluations may be explicitly verbalised, for example, participants may simply state ‘I trust you’. More commonly, they may be implicitly evidenced through displays of working co-operatively, showing care and concern, or displaying collegiality. This suggests that analysis of how people behave and use language and other semiotic ways of making meaning, in the settings in which trust is being developed, will potentially provide insights into what trust means for participants as well as how it is discursively constructed.

This present research also characterises trust as a consequence of actions and interactions being positively evaluated by relationship participants. Only as a consequence of positively evaluated events and experiences can a confidence and ‘trust’ in each other’s intentions and competencies to maintain, and not take advantage of the relationship, develop. It is also likely that once trust is initiated it will frame participants’ ongoing interactions and be discursively displayed through mutual understanding, mutual alignments, or cognitive and affective ties (Lewicki *et al*, 2006; Solomon & Flores, 2001, Jackson, 2013). In contrast, if participants negatively evaluate another’s actions and interactions, a lack of confidence and distrust will define the relationship.

Trust is therefore characterised in this research as an active and dynamic feature of relationships that is intimately intertwined with how the language and behaviour of relationship participants evolves. Framing trust in this way also provides a rationale for taking a discourse analytic approach to trust research. Analysis of the social and discursive practices that are in play in organisation-stakeholder relationships provides a means through which trust, or indeed distrust, may be ‘observed’.

This thesis also upholds the view that trust is a developmental process. Trust, as construed in this present study, is a dynamic aspect of a relationship that has the potential to strengthen or indeed recede over time. This development is dependent on how trust is fostered within relationships as well as on how a particular encounter or event is evaluated by its participants. This conceptualisation of trust does not define trust as a static, pre-formed, psychological state, but rather as one that is continually shaped through social and discursive practices.

Finally, trust in this research is premised on the understanding that parties’ evaluative decisions are not self-reliant; that is, that evaluations are held to be influenced by factors external to the immediate organisation-stakeholder context such as historical, social and institutional factors and/or internal influences such as the immediate context of the relationship and the psychological and affective state of participants. The potential for different combinations of each of these factors to influence trust is what makes trust such a complex and difficult construct both to define and to research.

The challenge for the trust researcher, which arises from this multi-faceted conceptualisation of trust, is how to account for different perceptions and instantiations of trust within a coherent and valid research approach whilst simultaneously allowing for more general research conclusions to emerge. The multi-perspectival discourse analytic framework, developed in recent years by Candlin and Crichton (Candlin, 2006; Candlin & Crichton, 2010, Candlin & Crichton, 2013a; Crichton, 2010) which is presented in Chapter 3, offers a means through which these research needs can be met.

## **2.9 Summary of chapter**

This chapter has provided an overview of trust research focussing in particular on the different types of trust that are held to be most relevant to the organisational context. These trust types have been categorised as broadly transactional or broadly relational. The chapter has emphasised that the main difference in these two conceptions of trust is one of orientation. In the case of a transactional orientation, participants are primarily oriented to the outcome of an

exchange whereas in the case of relational trust, the orientation is to the development of the relationship that supports the exchange. The chapter has also theorised that a transactional trust orientation will be discursively characterised as impersonal while a relational trust orientation will be more personal and most likely underpinned by affect.

The chapter has also presented an overview of trust theory that supports a developmental view of trust. Additionally, the chapter has provided a broad summary of research that examines the implied association between discourse and trust and so complements the present discourse analytic research. Finally, the chapter has outlined how trust is conceptualised in this thesis.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical framework, discourse analytic methodologies and research approach**

### **3.1 Overview of chapter**

The preceding chapter focussed on the ontology of trust and discussed the different ways in which trust has been theoretically conceptualised. It concluded that relational trust, the main focus of this research, is complex, multi-faceted and multi-interpretable. This makes trust a difficult construct to research because it can be addressed from a very wide range of analytical perspectives. To address this complexity and to investigate how trust is conceptualised and actioned *in situ*, the thesis employs a multi perspectival discourse analytic framework (henceforth abbreviated to MPF). This has been adapted from the framework developed by Candlin (2006) Candlin & Crichton (2010) Crichton (2010) and Candlin & Crichton (2013a). A mixed-methodological approach to discourse analysis supports this framework. The aim in taking this theoretical and methodological approach is to offer a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of trust at each of the research sites, to achieve research ‘ecological validity’ (Cicourel, 1992; 2007) and to provide outcomes of practical relevance to the research sites and practitioners working in organisational communications.

Prior to presenting the MPF, the chapter draws on data taken from the three case studies to explain how I have arrived at this theoretical and methodological approach. Thus in section 3.2 I explain how discourse is to be understood in the context of this thesis and then in section 3.3, in light of this definition, I discuss the relevance of discourse to trust and how one might approach the discursive analysis of trust. Subsequently, the chapter presents an overview of the MPF (section 3.4), explains the research approach taken in each study (Table 3.1) and summarises the discourse analytic methodologies that are drawn upon in the studies (section 3.5). The chapter concludes by presenting a summary of the MPF perspectives, methodologies and semiotic resources that are applied in each study (Table 3.2).

### **3.2 Defining discourse**

A research approach and methodology that has been noticeably absent from trust research is discourse analysis (henceforth DA), yet DA has the potential to inform this field of enquiry in a number of different ways. DA provides for the fine-grained analysis of language (Antaki, 2011) as well as other semiotic systems (see Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) through which trust might

be constituted and displayed. DA also allows for investigation of discursively mediated social practices (Scollon & Scollon, 2007) that play a role in engendering trust and for exploration of parties' inner cognitive and affective states, as revealed through both verbal and non-verbal features of communication (see McEvily *et al*, 2003; Cameron & Masden, 2009). Additionally, DA can be employed to assess the influences on trust of the wider macro-social and institutional order (see section 3.4.3.3) and to provide explanation of how trust also shapes and supports this order (e.g. Lewis & Weigert, 1985; McKnight *et al*, 1998; Misztal, 2001).

To explain these potential applications of DA firstly requires an understanding of how 'discourse' is conceptualised in this thesis. The term 'discourse' is used in three main ways in the present research, following different theoretical schools. Each conceptualisation of the term offers different types of analytic insight. The three conceptions are explained prior to discussing their relevance to the present trust research and their influence on the perspectives that make up the MFP.

The term 'discourse' is a difficult concept to apply 'largely because there are so many conflicting and overlapping definitions formulated from various theoretical and disciplinary standpoints' (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3). The study of 'discourse', defined in one way or another, has a long history which has encompassed a very wide range of theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. Discourse analysts, as Crichton notes (2010, p. 13), now claim over forty distinct methods of analysis which span both micro and macro level approaches to the analysis of language and communication. Critical discourse analysis (CDA), for example, explores how power and ideological positions are manifested in discourse and the effects of this on social and organisational systems. In contrast, more micro-level approaches such as conversation analysis (CA) focus on fine grained analysis of talk-in interaction.

The first conceptualisation of discourse used in this thesis refers to discourse with a small 'd', i.e. when used as an uncountable noun. This conception is most often associated with discourse analysts working at a micro-level (e.g. conversation analysts, applied linguists, ethnomethodologists and interactional sociolinguists) whose aim it is to examine situated examples of language-in-use. The methodological approach associated with this definition of discourse centres on analysis of interactions and linguistic behaviours that comprise the 'interaction order' (Goffman, 1981). The interaction order can be understood as the tacitly held normative rules of interaction which can be inferred, according to Goffman (1974; 1981), by observing face-to-face interactions and analysing how parties collaborate and respond to the business at hand. To justify this approach, Goffman assumes that:

When individuals attend to any current situation, they face the question: “What is it that’s going on here?” Whether asked explicitly, as in times of confusion or doubt, or tacitly, during occasions of usual certitude, the question is put and the answer to it is presumed by the way the individuals then proceed to get on with the affairs at hand.

(Goffman, 1974, p. 153)

Studies of discourse at this micro-level such as CA (see section 3.5.2) generally focus on the analysis of detailed transcripts of face-to-face interaction. Their aim is to assess, in line with Goffman (1974; 1981), how adherence to the tacitly held and normative rules of the interaction order, support, or challenge the existing social order to bring about social equilibrium and/or change. Although able to capture the purposeful nature of the linguistic and behavioural choices that parties make when communicating in face-to-face situations, the conception that discourse is an activity that we ‘do’ within our world, at a particular moment in time (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003), does not account for the influence(s) on communicative activities of the broader social and institutional contexts in which particular behaviours and interactions occur.

The second conceptualisation of discourse used in this thesis is associated with a more complex ‘social constructionist’ paradigm. In this paradigm discourse is defined as an instrumental process which structures society and the world as we know it. As Fairclough comments:

there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure...On the one hand, discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure...On the other hand discourse is socially constitutive.

(Fairclough, 1992, p. 64).

Similar to micro-level discourse analytic approaches, this macro-orientation to discourse retains a focus on the linguistic analysis of texts. Its main interest, however, is in how discourse works to formulate ideological positions, to shape knowledge, beliefs and values, and to determine how acceptable modes of speaking, thinking, or acting in social and institutional settings becomes regulated (see Fairclough 1992; 2010; Candlin, 2001; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Hocking, 2010 for more on this issue). Trust in the context of employee-manager relationships, for example, is likely to be rather different from that between friends. The diversity of trust is due, in part, to differences in the way in which power and status shape relationships but is also a consequence of the different experiences and interactions that participants have shared.

The third conceptualisation of discourse used in this thesis is applied in DA studies that take a specific professional or institutional focus. Drawing on the Foucauldian view of discursive practice and ‘L’ordre du discours’ (Foucault, 1967, 1982), these studies investigate how social and discursive practices come to typify a particular organisation, profession, or ‘community of practice’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and shape a recognised ‘institutional order’ (see Berger &

Luckmann, 1966 and section 3.4.3.3). Analytic methodologies associated with this definition of discourse are characterised by investigation of intertextuality and interdiscursive relations (see section 3.5.5) and include analysis of how institution-specific discourses relate to and are colonised by other ‘orders of discourse’ (Fairclough, 1992). This orientation has been associated particularly with critical discourse analysis (CDA) and the work of scholars such as Fairclough (1993, 2010) and Wodak (1996) who see DA as central to the interpretation of social change.

Prior to concluding this brief discussion of how discourse is defined, it is worth noting that Gee ([1999] 2005) and Gee, Hull & Lankshear (1996) propose a useful way of distinguishing between the more general use of the term discourse meaning simply ‘language in use’ (Stubbs, 1983) as opposed to its association with specific social and institutionalised contexts and interests. They refer to the latter as discourse with a capital ‘D’ and propose that:

A Discourse is composed of ways of talking, listening, reading, writing, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, using tools and objects in particular settings and at specific times so as to display and recognise particular social activity.

(Gee *et al*, 1996, p. 16).

In this way, one might refer to the Discourse of Social Work or the Discourse of Accountancy as indexing a particular form of language and its associated social practices. This conception of discourse is drawn upon in the first case study, in Chapter 4, in which Branham introduces the practices of sustainability assurance through appropriation of the Discourse of Accounting.

A further significance of Gee *et al*’s (1996) capital ‘D’ definition of discourse is that it is not restricted to spoken and written language, but also covers a range of attributes and semiotic features that contribute to making social and institutional entities recognisable. Consideration of non-verbal and other semiotic means of communication foregrounds multi-modal approaches to DA of the type undertaken by Kress & van Leeuwen (2001) and Kress (2003) and highlights the significance of physical aspects of setting and the behavioural environment that Duranti & Goodwin (1992) suggest are important to shaping a discourse’s ontology.

In spite of the different conceptions of the term discourse outlined above, there is often overlap in discourse analytic approaches and methodologies. Researchers from different traditions adopt both ‘bottom up’ and ‘top down’ DA approaches and draw explicitly on the insights and methodologies of other traditions. This is especially the case in ‘applied’ approaches to discourse such as those associated with ‘applied’ CA which have more recently included ethnographic data (see section 3.5.2).

Each of the above conceptions of discourse is drawn upon in the present thesis and is reflected in the different orientations to trust taken at each research site. The following section (3.3) provides brief analysis of extracts taken from data at each research site which index these different conceptions. These extracts are also used to illustrate the different orientations to trust that emerged as salient in the three research organisations and which underline the requirement for a multi-perspectival research agenda.

### **3.3 The relationship between discourse and trust**

As Chapter 2 (section 2.8) concluded, the term ‘trust’ is susceptible to multiple interpretations and is, in practice, conceptualised in a number of different ways. This complexity is reflected by the research sites in this thesis each of which differed in its prevailing conceptualisation of trust and in the way(s) in which it attempted to operationalise trust. Accordingly, each research site thus offered this study of trust different data.

My research agenda, although concerned overall with the discursive construction of trust, was also designed to reflect these context-specific differences. To broadly explain these differences, I will now briefly discuss extracts from Branham's (Case study 1), Gunz Dental (Case study 2) and the Community Liaison Group (Case study 3). These extracts are taken from the first phase of data collection at each of the sites. They provided me, as researcher, with initial insights into how trust was conceptualised at each site and also laid the foundations for taking the multi-perspectival and mixed-methodological discourse analytic approach to trust.

I focus first on interactional data taken from the third case study which, as explained in Chapter 1 (section 1.3), was the study that initiated this trust research. Extract 3.1 is taken from the first of four community liaison group meetings that I attended. It has been chosen as representative of relational trust in its final phase when firmly established. In this extract, Fran, the group's facilitator, has just moved the meeting onto its next agenda item and is waiting for the next presenter, Graham, to set up the overhead projector for his presentation. Joy and Mary are community representatives.

Extract 3.1 is transcribed in line with Jefferson's (1984) approach to transcription (an overview of transcription symbols which are used in all three studies is provided in Appendix 1).

### Extract 3.1

#### Case study 3: Community liaison group

1. Fran (to Graham): That's not your hand shaking is it?
2. All: ((General Laughter))
3. Mary: You don't make him that nervous do [you]?
4. Fran: [It's not] m:e.
5. Joy: You frighten the poor man
6. Fran: Not me, [you guys]
7. Joy: ((laughing)) [What?] You've got to take responsibility for your own fierceness=
8. Fran : = OK alright (.) well let's move to the community update then and general business and give Graham a little bit of time to get the projector sorted.

A number of interactional and discursive features are of relevance to interpreting Extract 3.1 as an example of established relational trust. Most obvious is the personally directed humour which includes, Fran teasing Graham about his shaking hand (line 1), Mary and Joy's light-hearted accusations that Fran makes Graham 'nervous' (line 3) and 'frightens' him (line 5) and Joy's humorous reprimand of Fran – suggesting that Fran should 'take responsibility for her own fierceness' (line 7). This humour is indicated not merely through the choice of certain lexis and the use of rhetorical questioning (lines 1 & 3) but also by its being mirrored in, and amplified by, general and specific laughter (lines 2 & 7). The relevance of humour and laughter analysis to defining trust forms part of the analytic approach taken in Study 3. For the purposes of this introductory discussion, however, it is clear that, in Extract 3.1, humour and its ensuing laughter provide strong evidence of mutual trust in that participants feel they are close enough to tease each other and share a joke at each other's expense. However, there are a number of other factors at play in this extract which allow us to identify it as a display of mutual trust.

Extract 3.1 contains an example of a shift in 'footing', which Holmes (2005) would describe as being from 'task-oriented' to 'socially oriented talk' (Holmes, 2005, p. 671). In this case, 'footing' refers to the change of 'alignment', or 'stance' (see Goffman, 1984, p. 128), that is taken up by the participants at this point in the meeting and which represents a departure from the meeting's institutionally ratified 'core' business talk (Holmes, 2005, p. 675). The concept of 'footing' is most commonly attributed to the work of Goffman (1981; 1984) and is discussed in more detail in section 3.4.3.4 of this chapter.

The shift in footing occurs in line 8 when Fran moves the meeting back to its formal footing by suggesting that the group cover the community update and general business whilst waiting for Graham to sort out his technical problem. It is also in line 8 with her, 'OK alright (.) well let's move to the community update then and general business', that it becomes clear that Fran is in a

position of relative power in the group and is sanctioned to control the meeting. Yet Fran has for the majority of this extract not been interacting from a professional position but has instead personally aligned herself with Joy and Mary. In line 4, Fran has returned the humour levelled at her by Mary and Joy in lines 3 and 5 by suggesting 'it's not m:e' (line 4) and repeating this in line 7 with the rather colloquial use of the term 'guys' in, 'Not me you guys'. It is also significant that Fran, as the group facilitator, has allowed this personally oriented diversion in the meeting. These observations are significant because such personally oriented talk would be unlikely to occur in the context of a formal meeting unless participants had substantial knowledge and prior experience of working with each other. Indeed in circumstances where this were not the case the personal accusations in lines 3 and 5, however humorously intended, could be taken as offensive.

Although this interaction is evidence for trust-based interpersonal relationships, Extract 3.1 neither explains how trust has developed, nor does it provide information on the context and purpose of CLG meetings. Further, it does not include data that can address questions such as How long have the participants known each other? What role do the members play in the meetings? What is the purpose of the meeting? and What is the role of the facilitator? The response to such questions is unlikely to be explicitly available in the meeting and requires recourse to 'insider knowledge' such as might be collected through participant interviews.

I turn now to Case studies 1 and 2 which exhibit different orientations to trust. I demonstrate these orientations by discussion of extracts taken from two interviews with the Director of Branhams (Extract 3.2) and the Managing Director of Gunz Dental (Extract 3.3). These interviews were 'co-constructed' by me, as researcher, and the Directors as research participants. Further explanation of the relevance of interview co-construction is found in Talmy (2011) Talmy (2011) and Talmy & Richards (2011) and discussed in section 3.4.3.2. Extracts 3.2 and 3.3 are taken from one of the first phases of data collection at each site, the aim of which was to investigate how trust was conceived and operationalised at the research organisation.

Branhams' Director and Gunz Dental's Managing Director hold comparable positions within their respective organisations and are each responsible for the decisions that shape their organisation's strategic direction. Both Directors support a view, in line with Arrow (1974), that trust is a basic necessity of organisational life. In spite of this shared view, the Directors differ in how they conceptualise trust and take different orientations to its development. These differences each privilege a different perception of the relationship between discourse and trust.

Extract 3.2 is taken from the beginning of my interview with Branhams' Director, in which I was exploring his characterisation of himself and Branhams as 'being in the trust business'.

### **Extract 3.2**

#### **Case study 1: Director Branhams**

1. Director: I've al:ways characterised us as being in the trust business (.) I think (.) probably because we're doing more consulting.
2. Researcher: /OK?/
3. Director: /and probably thinking/ more around assurance as being a (.) a true trust service, the er (.) you know, you're building credibility, you're building trust in the subject matter

The significance of Extract 3.2 for this research is the link that it makes between trust and the practice of assurance. The term 'Assurance' defines qualitative rather than quantitative approaches to auditing and originates from contemporary approaches to financial auditing. A more detailed explanation of this practice is provided in the first case study (Chapter 4, section 4.3). Branhams is a provider of sustainability assurance and as such its main business focus is to assure an organisation's corporate sustainability performance and/or reporting.

The Director's reference to assurance as a 'true trust service' in line 3, defines the practice of assurance as intrinsically trustworthy. This association between practice and trust is a reference to an impersonal, in the Director's view, externally validated form of trust which Branhams is appropriating for use in creating its own trustworthy identity. This appropriation aligns trust at Branhams with institution-based forms of trust as described by Rousseau *et al* (1998) and discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.4. This view is further supported by the Director's reference to Branhams' practices as being focussed on 'building credibility' or 'building trust in the subject matter' (line 3). Although it is clear that Branhams' consultants need to forge trusting relationships with the clients for whom they are undertaking assurance services, the implication in Extract 3.2 is that the route to accomplishing this centres on enhancing the reputation of assurance as a 'true trust service' rather than on developing relational trust. This conceptualisation of trust implicates consideration of the wider institutional context which affords assurance, in the Director's opinion, the status of a 'true trust service'.

In the second study, Gunz Dental was for the duration of this research implementing a specific TBS across the organisation. For Gunz Dental, trust is thus defined in terms of this strategy and is the anticipated outcome of its effective implementation. Extract 3.3 is taken from a semi-

structured interview with Gunz Dental's Managing Director (abbreviated to MD) in which I asked him about the rationale for selecting this strategy. He explains that:

### **Extract 3.3**

#### **Case study 2: MD, Gunz Dental**

we wanted to shift the culture of the organisation to a more performance management focus and we wanted to do that through a trust (.) sort of concept, so it's about people keeping their promises (.) so when you translate that to an organisational point of view, where somebody asks you to do something you agree to do it and then if you do:n't deliver on that you've got an integrity issue.

In Extract 3.3, the MD directly links the trust strategy to organisational change and specifically to instituting a performance management orientation at Gunz Dental. Trust is defined as an outcome of Gunz's staff managing their own workplace performance by delivering on their promises. In contrast to Extract 3.2, the reference to trust in Extract 3.3 is not to an externally validated form of trust but rather to trust as an outcome of change in organisational interactions and behaviours.

The main aim of this brief introductory discussion is to emphasise that approaches to researching trust *in situ* are not straightforward and that trust does not fit neatly into a pre-defined theoretical framework or methodological approach. Trust, as these brief extracts have demonstrated, is defined differently in different contexts and in different situations, an observation which is also highlighted in the work of Blomqvist (1997) and Bhattacharya *et al* (1998). It follows that trust can, therefore, be analysed from many different perspectives.

My challenge in approaching this research was how to most effectively bring these different perspectives together and provide for more than mere description of the accomplishment of trust at each of the research sites. My aim was to provide grounded explanations of why and how trust was approached and to seek a more 'applied' research approach which would have relevance across organisations, institutions and professional domains. The application of a multi-perspectived discourse analytic framework and mixed methodological approach was selected as facilitative of this outcome. The rest of this chapter provides description and explanation of this approach.

### **3.4 The multi-perspectival discourse analytic research framework (MPF)**

Multi-perspectived and mixed-methodological approaches to discourse research are receiving an increasing level of support (e.g. Fairclough, 1992, 2010; Layder, 1998; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Scollon, 2001; Scollon & Scollon, 2007, Sarangi & Candlin, 2001; Sarangi, 2002; Candlin, 2006; Hocking, 2010; Candlin & Crichton, 2010; Crichton, 2010; Candlin & Crichton, 2013a). They focus on drawing together previously disparate and eclectic approaches to discourse research by seeking to span the micro-macro discourse divide that was introduced, through defining different conceptions of discourse, in the previous section (3.3). Multi-perspectived approaches provide a means of addressing the relationship between large-scale macro social systems and structures, such as are evidenced in institutions, and the micro-actions of individuals. The MPF provides the means to address this relationship but also responds to the theoretical concern of how to ensure that discourse studies are accountable to the research sites and participants that they represent. This concern has been a focus of scholars such as Sarangi & Candlin (2001) Roberts (2005) Crichton (2010) Coupland & Coupland (2001) and Candlin & Crichton (2013a). It has underpinned the work of Cicourel and frames his notion of ‘ecological validity’ (1982, 1992, 1996, 2007). As Cicourel’s work has been a strong influence on the development of the multi-perspectival framework adopted in this study, I provide a brief overview of the construct of ‘ecological validity’ prior to presenting the MPF.

#### **3.4.1 Achieving research ecological validity**

Cicourel’s (1982, 1992, 1999, 2007) contention is that the adequacy and validity of discourse studies relies on the achievement of ‘ecological validity’. His work draws on sociology, linguistics, pragmatics, anthropology, cognitive psychology and cognitive science and reflects a belief that language is a crucial resource for creating and sustaining social interaction and social reality. This belief is widely supported by, amongst others, Jaworski & Coupland (1999), Fairclough (1992, 2010) Giddens (1993) Layder (1993, 2005) and Mouzelis (1995, 2008). Cicourel also supports a sociological orientation to the study of discourse by claiming that:

Language and other social practices are interdependent. Knowing something about the ethnographic setting, the perception of, and characteristics attributed to others, and broader and local organisational conditions becomes imperative for an understanding of linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of communicative events.

(Cicourel, 1992, p. 294).

It is this view that underpins Cicourel’s pursuit of research ‘ecological validity’ and his concern as to how analysts, who generally study discourse in the way of non-experimental social sciences, can convince others of the viability and authenticity of their claims (Cicourel, 2007).

Cicourel (1992, 2007) has been openly critical of applied linguistics research which only takes a micro-level view of language and which, in his view, portrays social interaction and discourse materials as if they have ‘a life of their own’ (Cicourel, 2007 p736). To Cicourel, such research approaches fail because they ignore the fact that ‘situated social interaction is always embedded in daily socio-cultural and cognitive/emotional processes that constrain and shape discourse’ (Cicourel 2007, p736). The achieving of ecological validity thus requires that discourse studies not only account for the contextual features of interactional settings but also seek to make explicit the normally tacit forms of reasoning and information processing that are brought to bear, both by participants and analysts, when approaching and participating in research.

Cicourel’s belief is that it is only through explicit accounting for the decisions made in selecting research approaches and taking account of participants’ orientations to research that analysts will be able to convince others of the viability and authenticity of their studies (Cicourel, 2007 p.735). This call for a reflexive accounting of research practices is not new (see Sarangi & Candlin, 2007) with Duranti & Goodwin also calling for studies in which the researcher:

Does not hide his or her sources of information and research choices but makes them into a common resource to be shared with the readers in an attempt to unveil hidden processes of the selection of information which guides participants and analyst alike in the course of their everyday lives.

(Duranti & Goodwin, 1992, p. 292)

Both Duranti & Goodwin and Cicourel bring into focus the issue of research accountability and the need to convince others of the viability and authenticity of the claims that are made by analysts in shaping and conducting research.

One means of addressing this issue is through ‘joint problematisation’ (see Sarangi & Candlin, 2001; Roberts & Sarangi, 1999) which encourages analysts and participants to collaboratively engage in shaping and continually progressing the research agenda. A further means is through the collection and triangulation of both primary and secondary data sources, including historical resources, surveys, participant interactions and accounts and ethnographic observations.

However, even with such approaches it is, as Cicourel (2007) notes, only ever possible to approximate ecological validity in the social and behavioural sciences (2007, p. 735) given that they are ultimately addressing the continually shifting and continually constrained worlds of participants and analysts.

### **3.4.2 A multi-perspectived discourse analytic research agenda**

The following sub-sections of 3.4 provide an overview of theoretical considerations that underpin the inclusion of each MPF perspective, address the relevance of each perspective to trust research and offer introductory accounts of how the perspectives have been addressed in each of the case studies in this thesis. As each of the perspectives in the MPF is intrinsically associated with specific kinds of analytic resources and methodological tools, these are also referred to in discussion of the relevant perspectives. An expanded discussion of the methodologies employed in each of the case studies is then provided in section 3.5.

Prior to addressing the perspectives in the framework, I address following a number of general issues concerned with application of the MPF. These are based both on the description of the MPF in Crichton (2010), as well as from my own experience in working with the MPF.

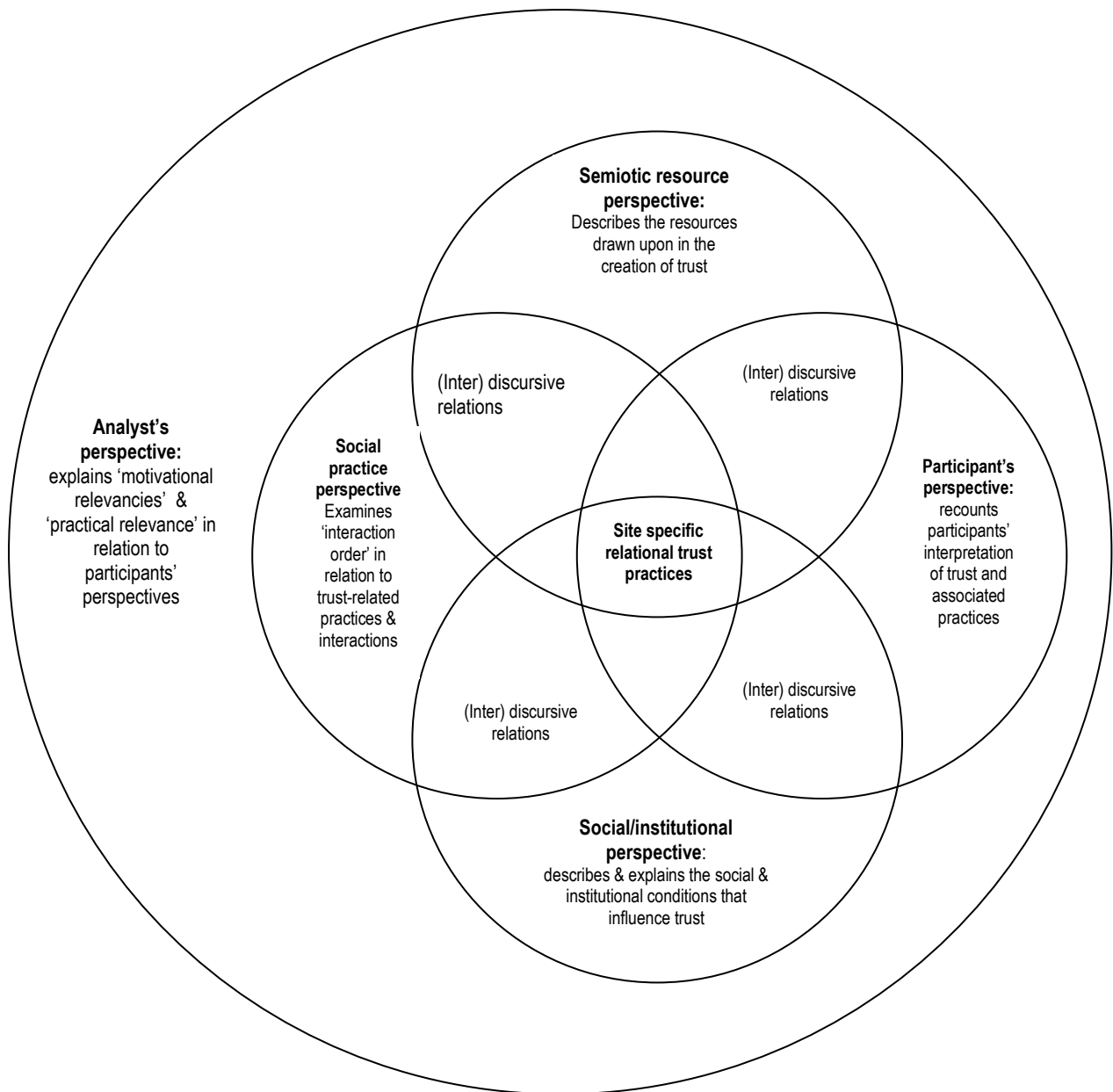
The MPF has been adapted for use in this research from that originally developed by Candlin (2006) Candlin & Crichton (2010) and Crichton (2010). These adaptations have reshaped the perspective descriptors provided in Crichton (2010) to ensure their specific relevance to this trust research.

Not all of the perspectives are addressed in each case study (see Table 3.2). This is in line with Crichton's position and his acknowledgement that although each of the five perspectives in the framework is of equal relevance, it may not be possible, or even appropriate, to accord each one equal weight or to address each perspective. In practice:

Discursive practices may be investigated from one or more perspective: a single discursive practice can be viewed from one perspective, or at the overlaps between two, three or all four circles.

(Crichton 2010, p. 33).

The choice and weighting of perspectives is dependent on the data to which the analyst has access, the context(s) in which research takes place, the analyst's own disciplinary and professional background and participant input. Nevertheless, the convergence of the perspectives at the centre of the diagram illustrates that it is desirable to investigate discourse from all perspectives.



**Figure 3.1 A multi-perspectival discourse analytic research framework (MPF). (Adapted from Candlin & Crichton, 2011, p. 9).**

Although in each of the case studies presented in this thesis some perspectives receive more emphasis than others, the overall aim is to provide 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of 'trust work', or evidence of the enactment of trust-related social and discursive practices at each of the research sites. Because the studies were conducted over a prolonged period of time, and in Studies 2 and 3 over a number of years, decisions about which perspectives to address in each case were not pre-determined. In line with Layder's (1993) recommendations for social research such decisions were 'held lightly' throughout the period of study. This allowed the research to remain responsive to incoming data and analysis and to findings that were

continually emerging as the research progressed (Crichton, 2010, p. 34). The studies in this thesis therefore represent the culmination of research decisions concerning the collection, significance and triangulation of different data sources. Each case study represents the assimilation of findings that over the period of enquiry were judged to be of most significance to this trust research and to the research organisation. It is therefore important that the indicators of trust discussed in each study are 'read' as significant only in light of these prior research decisions and in light of the different phases of analysis from which they have emerged. This is discussed further in the following sections of this chapter and especially in sections 3.4.3.1, 3.4.3.2 and Table 3.1.

The use of the Venn diagram for the MPF is significant for illustrating how each of the perspectives is interconnected or 'mutually implicating' (Candlin & Crichton, 2010, p. 9) and anticipates analysis of inter-discursive relations. Candlin & Maley (1997) define inter-discursive relations as 'the use of elements from one discourse and social practice which carry institutional and social meanings from other discourses and other social practices' (1997, p. 212). As is discussed in the individual case studies, carrying meaning across different contexts and resources is significant for the development, or otherwise, of trust. Relational trust emerges as influenced by the interpenetration of the social/institutional and social practice perspectives: that is, trust is an outcome of participants' different expectations of and experiences with the macro-social 'institutional order' (Berger & Luckmann, 1976), the local organisational context, and the 'interaction order' (Goffman, 1981). There is consequently an emphasis in each of the case studies on describing the influences on relational trust of these perspectives and interpreting how they have inter-discursively shaped the conception of trust and the trust work practices at each research site.

### **3.4.3 Addressing the different perspectives**

The following sub-sections of 3.4 provide an overview of the main focus of each of the perspectives in the MPF and broadly discuss their relevance to this research.

#### **3.4.3.1 The Analyst's perspective: accounting for motivational and practical relevancy**

The deliberate prominence given to the analyst's perspective in the MPF acknowledges the crucial role that the analyst plays in the research process. Although visually this perspective suggests analyst control of the research agenda, in reality, the overall aim of the MPF is to encourage analyst-participant collaboration. The aim of the analyst's perspective is to explain

the ‘motivational relevancy’ (Coupland & Coupland, 2001; Sarangi & Candlin, 2001; Candlin & Crichton, 2013a) and ‘practical relevancy’ (Roberts, 2005) of the research in relation to participants’ perspectives.

Central to the analyst’s perspective in the MPF is the question, also addressed by Cicourel’s notion of ecological validity (section 3.4.1), of how to account for differences between the researcher’s perceptions, both as analyst and as participant, within the research process (Sarangi & Candlin, 2001; Sarangi, 2007) whilst objectively pursuing practical relevancy.

The analyst’s perspective acknowledges that analysts and participants bring different interests, approaches, ‘stocks of professional knowledge’ (SIKs) (Peräkylä *et al*, 2005; Peräkylä & Vehviläinen, 2003) and social experiences to workplace-based research and that each of these has the potential to influence the research approach and research outcomes. These differences can be acknowledged and accounted for by what Sarangi (1999) defines as a ‘jointly problematised’ research approach in which there is collaborative identification by participants and analyst of relevant practitioner foci, interests, motivations and concerns. Motivational and practical relevancy can, and according to Roberts (2005) and Sarangi & Candlin (2010) should, be collaboratively shaped. As Roberts (2005) argues:

If applied linguistics is to be practically relevant and to have some intervention status, then the design and implementation of the research needs to be negotiated from the start with those who may be affected by it.

(Roberts, 2005, p.132.)

Collaborative approaches to research differ from more traditional research which is shaped by the analyst and usually addresses issues of the analyst’s own choosing. Weber (1949), in reference to scientific research, notes that, ‘the very recognition of the existence of a scientific problem coincides personally with the possession of specifically oriented motives and values’ (1949, p. 61). Goffman (1959) and Schutz (1962) make the point that analysts in the social sciences study phenomena in line with their own preferred motivations, or what Bourdieu terms ‘points of view’ (1999) and that this is inseparable from what is being viewed (see also Sarangi & Candlin, 2001). Consequently, traditional research approaches, whether in the social or pure sciences, are seen as inherently subjective.

In this research, the focus on trust to some extent counters this view. As previously discussed, conceptualisations of what trust is and what it does differ markedly. Consequently, it was not possible for me, as analyst, to pre-determine the direction that this research would take. Even in the selection of research sites that had an acknowledged interest in trust, I could not take for granted that participants’ perceptions of trust were identical to my own. Early discussions with

participants at the sites were fundamental to ascertaining the trust ontology and shaping the specific course that this trust research was to take at each site. The first steps in this research therefore relied not so much on a pre-defined concept of trust, or on a pre-designed research process, but rather on collaborative conceptualisation of 'trust' as a focal research theme.

As more applied approaches to discourse research emerge, for example, the different forms of 'applied' CA discussed in section 3.5.2, it is increasingly common for participants to become a resource in their own right. In support of this, Sarangi & Candlin (2003) note that:

The practitioners who are the subjects of research are more knowledgeable about their practices than the researchers themselves, which makes it necessary for discourse researchers to constantly seek the practitioners' insights for everyday sense-making. Following this logic a bit further, we would suggest that workplace practitioners are discourse experts in their own rights, since their work practices are constituted in discourse (Sarangi 2002) and they can easily reflect upon their practices in a metalinguistic sense.

(Sarangi & Candlin, 2003, p. 283)

A discourse analyst's expertise lies in her ability to deconstruct and explain the significance of discursive practices at a micro-level of analysis. Although this is crucial to discourse research, as Sarangi and Candlin note in the above quotation, the 'expertise' of participants is also a valuable research resource. Further, if analysts and participants do not work collaboratively, the analyst will remain an 'outsider' to the research context and cannot realistically make decisions on behalf of research participants about the practical relevancy of the research.

The overriding issue in accomplishing motivational and practical relevancy is therefore, as Sarangi and Candlin acknowledge, 'an issue of access to mutuality' (2010, p. 2). In other words, this access relies on the development of mutually beneficial analyst-participant relationships that can continually inform, construct and reconstruct the research process. Paradoxically, in light of the theme of trust in this research, such mutually beneficial relationships are dependent on the achievement of analyst-participant trust.

A number of challenges are raised for the analyst in seeking to implement collaborative research. These centre around what Sarangi (2002) terms the 'analyst's paradox' and concern the extent to which an analyst can be both a researcher and a member of the group being studied. The paradox arises because the analyst needs to access both participants' knowledge of their discursive practices as well as their 'tacit knowledge structures' but, as Sarangi & Candlin note (2003 p. 274), is also bound to report on these from the analyst's disciplinary perspective. For the analyst this is an issue of aligning the rigorously theoretical approach that is necessary

for research with one that can account for the variety of insights and data provided by the participants. As Crichton (2010) suggests:

On the one hand this is a problem of how the analyst can align her analysis with the perceptions of participants, reflecting the fact that they are experts in their worlds, without transforming the analyst's own perspective into that of a faux participant. On the other hand, if the analyst retains her own analytical assumptions and categories, she risks conducting an analysis that transforms the perspectives of participants and is irrelevant to their worlds.

(Crichton 2010, p. 14)

Crichton is suggesting here that, if research fails to account for the different ontological perspectives and different resources that analysts and participants have at their disposal, discourse studies may not be able to support both theoretical and practical outcomes.

In the present research, the foundation for a mutually supported research agenda was, to a large extent, already in place prior to the commencement of the research because each research organisation had a pre-defined interest in trust. Moreover, the willingness of the organisations to be involved in this research was premised on assumptions that a deeper understanding of trust, and how it might be operationalized, would be of benefit to the organisation. My rather broadly defined research aim and research questions, presented in Chapter 1 section 1.1, were therefore supported at the outset of the research by the Directors at each of the sites. The remaining issue in designing and conducting the research was the necessity of collaboratively shaping the research to be site specific and practically relevant. In Studies 2 and 3 I was able to accomplish this, however, in the first study, difficulties with access to personnel and documentation meant that a collaborative research approach was difficult to achieve.

It is worth noting that addressing motivational and practical relevancy is not a 'one off' event, but rather an inherent aspect of an ongoing collaborative research approach. It relies on flexible research design in which there is opportunity, whilst the research is in train, for participant-analyst intervention, input and reflection on the process of the research, as well as on its findings. Motivational and practical relevancy is intimately related to the reflexive design and conduct of the research process.

The overall research approach was similar at each of the research sites and comprised different phases of data collection, analysis, data triangulation and participant-analyst interaction and reflection. Reflective phases were approached in line with Schön's (1983) theories of the reflective practitioner and encouraged both 'reflecting-in-action' and 'reflecting-on-action'. They were designed to support participants' explicitly reflecting on and evaluating the practices through which their organisation was attempting to develop trust (for more on this see the

participant perspective section 3.5.2 and Chapter 7, 7.2.1). The research approach was not linear but recursive and provided for a continual narrowing down of the large volume of data that was collected at each site. As each case study progressed, it was gradually streamlined in order to target the main issue(s) of relevance to this research and to the organisation at the time of the study. Differences in the research approach at each site were attributable to the number of times the different phases of research could be applied. In the case of the first study, the context of a small consulting organisation meant that access to data and personnel was minimised and consequently the different phases of the research approach could not be continually applied as they were in Studies 2 and 3.

Table 3.1 provides a broad overview of the different phases in the research approach and presents an overview of the main analytic methodologies that were drawn on in each phase.

### **3.4.3.2 The participants' perspective**

The call for the central positioning of participants in discourse studies and the need to recover and acknowledge their subjective experiences in research is not new (see Goffman, 1959, 1961; Blumer, 1966; Gumperz, 1982; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Cicourel, 1992; Candlin, 1997; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999; Sarangi, 2002). Blumer noted that the social world is 'forged by the actor out of what he perceives, interprets and judges' (1966, p. 542) so that the task of those involved in any kind of socially oriented research is to:

see the operating situation as the actor sees it, perceive objects as the actor perceives them, ascertain their meaning in terms of the meaning they have for the actor and follow the actor's line of conduct as the actor organises it.

(Blumer, 1966, p.542)

Layder too has called for discourse researchers to account for each participant's 'subjective career' and to seek to develop 'an empathetic understanding of the behaviour of those being studied' (1993, p. 38) so as to effectively discern participants' own experiences of 'what is going on' (Goffman, 1974 ).

The incorporation of the participant perspective contributes to Geertz's proposition that research descriptions need to be thickened-up (Geertz, 1973). In the past this has most often necessitated some kind of ethnographic research in which the task of the researcher is to describe how actors themselves act towards the world on the basis of how they see it rather than on the basis of how it appears to the outside observer (Blumer, 1966, p. 542). Fast forward to contemporary approaches to discourse-based research and it would appear that not much has

changed. Recent discourse-based studies continue to seek incorporation of the participants' perspective but are now more likely to do so through a 'jointly problematised' research approach (Roberts & Sarangi, 1999). This approach relies, especially in workplace-based studies, not merely on interaction between participants and researchers but, where possible, on collaboration. In support of such an approach, Sarangi notes that, 'participation in a situated activity is a two-way street, so cooperation and trust between the researchers and participants are central to the research process and outcomes' (2007, p. 578). Candlin too, in the preface to Anataki's recent 2011 volume on 'Applied Conversation Analysis', points out that:

Jointly problematised and collaborative work with institutional members, complex and difficult though this can be in practice, is now as much a CA objective as it is in other discourse and talk/gesture -related methodologies.

(Candlin in Antaki, 2011 p. x)

The need to include participants in discourse studies also arises from the view, alluded to in section 3.4.1, that discourse studies cannot adequately reflect the nature of the organisations in which they are conducted without taking account of the participants whose modes of practice and stocks of professional knowledge continually reshape the workplace, define workplace activities, and influence the ground rules within which work-based tasks and goals are negotiated (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999, p25). The inclusion of the participant perspective also supports Cicourel's (1992, 1996, 2007, 2010) contention that an understanding of participants' experience(s) of the field or focal theme of research is crucial to both data interpretation and research validation (see section 3.4.1).

The task of the researcher in the participant perspective is to collect participant input that can inform the understanding of 'what it is that is going on here' (Goffman, 1974). Researchers should therefore aim, in addressing this perspective, to collect data which allows for participant interpretation of their social and discursive practice and which, thereby, allows their research to account for how participants perceive and feel about their world(s).

Discourse studies vary in the form that participant input may take but data is typically collected in the context of an ethnographic phase and is commonly qualitative comprising of, for example, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, or informal interactions. Narratives of participant experience as examined by scholars such as Jones & Candlin (2003) Holmes (2005) Fina *et al* (2006) and Taylor *et al* (2010) have become highly regarded as a means of interpretation of this perspective and are credited with being not only a source of data but also a way of accessing tacitly held ideologies, beliefs and values which are brought to bear on social and discursive practice.

The participant perspective is prominent in this research and participant input was crucial to focalising and interpreting trust in each study. It provided a means of accessing the ontology of trust at each site, highlighting the relevancy (or otherwise) of data sources, interpreting data in relation to trust and offering insights into the cognitive and affective world(s) of participants. The participants in the case studies can be categorised into two main groups: those in managerial positions whose responsibility it was to steer the organisation and design its social practices, and those who were the target of these practices.

Participant input comprised a major portion of the ethnographic phase(s) in each case study and was collected both through direct interaction with the analyst and indirect data collection (observation of interaction). Direct data collection encouraged participants to recount and reflect on their experiences of practice through informal discussions, semi-structured interviews and narrative accounts. Participant interviews form a significant proportion of the data set in each case study. Semi-structured interviews were selected in preference to highly structured interviews to allow for 'a high degree of flexibility according to a participant's experiences' (Broom, 2005, p. 66). Interviews played a dual role in each study and, in line with the approach to participant interviews expounded by Talmy (2010) Talmy (2011) and Talmy & Richards (2011), were analysed both at a micro-level through close linguistic analysis and at a macro-level in relation to illuminating recurrent analytic themes and providing broader ethnographic description of the social and discursive practices evident at the research sites. Participant input contextualised participants' roles, relationships, and work practices and also provided a window into their 'conceptual world(s)' (Geertz, 1973) thus allowing access to their tacitly held understandings, beliefs and trust-based relationships.

**Table 3.1 Accounting for motivational & practical relevancy through reflexive research design**

Phase	Focus	Participants	Aim	Methodological approach & tools
1	Joint problematisation of research foci	Analyst & Managing Director or equivalent	To determine the ontology of trust for each organisation, the purpose(s) for which trust is required, and the stakeholder group with which trust is being developed	Semi-structured interviews and general discussions with participants
2	Data Collection	Analyst	To collect external and internal documentation relating to the macro-social, institutional, and local organisational context e.g. historical documentation, practitioner discussions, company reports and documentation  To observe, listen, and collect examples of workplace practices	Ethnographic: including participant interviews, attendance at meetings and training sessions  Discourse analytic: broad examination of examples of social and discursive workplace practice
3	Initial analysis	Analyst	To identify recurrent and/or relevant themes across data sources at each site	Raw transcription of interactional data Macro-level theme-oriented analysis
4	Triangulation of data sources	Analyst, practitioner & participants	To seek input from research participants into relevance of themes and validate research approach.	Categorisation of relevant trust themes for each site
5	Finer grained analysis	Analyst	To explicate and interpret practices and communicative patterns in relation to their effect(s) on the development of trust	Fine-grained DA using the analytic tools of CA and transcription of data at a finer level of detail
5	Recursive data collection and analysis	Analyst, practitioner and participants	To consolidate analytic themes, collect further data, and ensure ongoing participant input into the research process	Ethnographic discourse analysis  Mediated discourse analysis  Narrative analysis
<p><b>Ongoing:</b> Recursive research approach including continued phases of data collection, analysis, and triangulation of sources and findings.</p> <p>Further collaboration with practitioners and participants to ensure that the research was meeting the needs of analyst and participants and leading to outcomes of practical relevance.</p>				

A further orientation to participant interviews, supported by Sarangi (2003) Talmy (2010) Talmy (2011) and Talmy & Richards (2011) was to view the research interview as a form of social practice. This orientation argues for an unpacking of assumptions which frame research interviews claiming, in line with Briggs (1986), that the problem with an interview being a recognisable speech event is that ‘we take for granted that we know what it is and what it produces’ (Briggs, 1986, p2) (see also Mischler, 1986).

In considering the research interview as a form of social practice, the researcher is encouraged to take account of both the role of interviewer and interviewee and to examine how they accomplish the interview within a particular setting, negotiate meaning and co-construct knowledge (Talmy 2010, p. 132). Included in this approach is also a questioning of the assumption that an interview reflects ‘truths’ and can accurately represent participants’ beliefs, feelings, or attitudes. As Holstein and Gubrium argue, in reality the research interview has the potential to take away from and transform these ‘truths’ (2003, p. 70). Without a heightened reflexive approach to interviews they have the potential to ‘largely remain black boxes’ without paying due attention to the ‘complex pragmatics that make them work’ (Briggs, 2007, p 555).

To draw together some of the points raised so far in this discussion of participant interviews, I return to Extracts 3.2 and 3.3. These extracts were initially discussed in section 3.3 as exemplifying different orientations to discourse. However, one might also analyse them at a finer-grained level of analysis. For ease of reference, these extracts are reproduced again below.

### **Extract 3.2**

#### **Study 1: Director Branham**

1. Director: I’ve al:ways characterised us as being in the trust business  
(.) I think (.) probably because we’re doing more consulting.
2. Analyst: /OK?/
3. Director: /and probably thinking/ more around assurance as being a (.) a  
true trust service, the er (.) you know, you’re building  
credibility, you’re building trust in the subject matter

### **Extract 3.3**

#### **Study 2: MD, Gunz**

we wanted to shift the culture of the organisation to a more performance management focus and we wanted to do that through a trust (.) sort of concept, so it’s about people keeping their promises (.) so when you translate that to an organisational point of view, where somebody asks you to do something you agree to do it, and then if you do:n’t deliver on that you’ve got an integrity issue.

Although the interview questions which preceded Extracts 3.2 and 3.3 guided the participants towards addressing trust in their responses, the choice of ‘how’ to respond lies, as Talmy (2010) notes of the research interview, with the participants’. Consequently, participant responses may provide the research with ethnographic content whilst simultaneously furnishing the analyst with more personal information about the participants and providing insight into the analyst-participant relationship. We might note that both Extracts 3.2 and 3.3 epitomise ‘reflective practice’ (see Schön 1983; Sarangi & Candlin, 2003) and that neither Branham’s Director nor Gunz’s MD is delivering a pre-prepared speech. Additionally, both extracts display evaluative ambiguity as evidenced by the participants’ tentativeness and hesitation. Analysis of these features, or as Talmy (2010) terms it, a consideration of the ‘hows’ of the interview, i.e. how participants respond in interviews as opposed to ‘what’ they say, has the potential to produce a much richer description of the participant perspective.

In Extract 3.2, Branham’s Director is pondering, as shown by his hesitant and modalised explanation of why he is talking less about trust, ‘(.) I think (.) probably’ (turn 1) and ‘probably thinking’ (turn 3). Further support for this proposition is provided by his use of ‘er (.)’ and the pragmatic participle ‘you know’ in turn 3. Likewise, in Extract 3.3, Gunz’s MD seems to be struggling to define his organisation’s approach to trust when he explains Gunz’s cultural change strategy as ‘a trust (.) sort of concept’. In each case, these pragmatic features of talk may be explained as exemplifying ‘cognitive effort’ (McEvily *et al*, 2003, p. 97). In other words, Branham’s Director and Gunz’s MD are ruminating on information rather than providing an immediate response.

Cognitive effort is held to be related to trust in a number of different ways. When knowledge is passed between parties who trust each other it is more likely to be accepted at face value and the ‘trustworthiness of the source’ becomes a proxy for the ‘quality and veracity of the knowledge conveyed’ (McEvily *et al*, 2003, p. 97). If parties trust each other, cognitive effort is conserved because it is not necessary for them to spend time questioning the veracity of the knowledge conveyed. The counterpoint to this is that, if cognitive effort is on display, it may show that a relationship is in its initial stages because a party is taking the time to accurately portray itself and accurately convey knowledge in order to win the trust of the other party. This is the case in Extract 3.2 where my relationship with the Director is in its earliest stages. The Director is potentially ‘sounding out’ my attitude towards his claim, that assurance is a true trust service to assess whether our views on this align.

Cognitive effort is also related to social identity and can be a face saving strategy through which parties ‘avoid’, or hesitate, to discuss issues that could potentially damage the relationship

thereby safeguarding it. Cognitive effort is a feature of participant interviews in the second case study at Gunz and serves to provide evidence of a two-dimensional model of trust being in play. In the Gunz case study it was displays of cognitive effort that eventually provided the warrant for the claim that employees did not trust their managers' abilities to manage even though they enjoyed close social relationships with them.

Cognitive effort may also be associated with complexity and the challenges of accurately portraying highly technical or abstract concepts in a concrete way. This appears to be the case in Extract 3.3 in which MD is attempting to define Gunz's trust strategy. After hesitating and demonstrating cognitive effort by referring to the strategy as a 'trust (.) sort of concept', MD provides an explicit example of what this means in practice by defining the 'concept' as making and delivering on promises.

Analysis of such subtle features of a participant's discursive repertoire can therefore provide the analyst not only with information about the subjective experience(s) of participants but also with an indication of how participants perceive and feel about their world(s). This aids in making explicit those facets of an individual which are normally hidden from view. In this present research, and especially in Case studies 2 and 3, it is these more covert features of discourse that are a significant indicator of the status of trust in the organisation-stakeholder relationships at each of the research sites.

Participant input in this research also consisted of data collected via audio taping and observing meetings and training sessions in which participants recounted their experience(s) of practice. Data from these sources afforded the opportunity to 'thicken up' description by providing both ethnographic insights into the physical and ideological world of the participants as well as insights into how participants discursively developed trust in interaction.

It is worth noting that, in this research, the collection of participant input relied on several complex trust-based analyst-participant relationships. Studies 2 and 3 were jointly problematised and the outcome of close collaboration between myself and those working in managerial roles within the respective organisations. However, these studies were also informed by input from participants working for these managers. I was aware during the different phases of research that these groups viewed my role in the organisation in quite different ways and that this had the potential to affect how they provided input for the research.

In the first case study of Branhams, I was categorised as a researcher and as someone who was coming into the organisation to 'collect' data and was defined solely by my academic background. Because Branhams is relatively small and could only provide limited access to

personnel, a truly collaborative research approach was ultimately difficult to institute at this site. The outcome was that my relationship with Branham's Director, which was based on mutual respect and a certain level of trust, had limited opportunity to develop into one which would support access to deeper insights into this organisation.

In the second case study of Gunz, my role was shaped both by my research and professional background and I was positioned as a comms 'expert' who could provide an added depth of insight into the status of Gunz's faltering trust strategy. I spent a considerable amount of effort countering this view because I saw my role as that of a researcher of Gunz, who was there to learn rather than to provide consultancy services. However, as the research progressed, the fact that I had professional expertise served to facilitate the development of a strong, trust-based relationship with Gunz management and especially with Gunz's HR manager with whom I worked most closely. This relationship eventually provided me with access to levels of the organisation that might more commonly be hidden from researcher view and served to enhance my understanding of trust and trust work at Gunz. Superficial evidence of this is provided by the fact that in Case study 2, although the overall findings of the research were critical and raised issues concerning employee-manager (dis) trust, Gunz's MD and HR manager were adamant that the organisation should be named in this study and did not wish a pseudonym to be used.

I had worked with Velcon, the organisation in the third study, for three-and-a-half years prior to the commencement of this research. Consequently, I was regarded in this case primarily as a professional practitioner who was doing research. In this case, I was therefore working from a pre-established basis of trust with Velcon's managers although not with the community representatives on the community liaison group to whom I was, prior to this research, unknown.

Despite the different roles that I was assigned at each research site, I was aware that in undertaking trust research I was investigating relational trust whilst simultaneously attempting to develop it with participants in order to study their practices. Although the intention of this research is not to critically evaluate the analyst-participant relationship, it was evident that the research theme of trust facilitated this relationship for two main reasons. Firstly, because trust is a universal concept about which all participants could conceivably have something to say, I was able to more easily align my own interests with those of the manager-participants. This occurred because I was able to position myself not as a 'trust expert' but rather as someone who, like them, was interested in understanding more about this phenomenon and could do so by working with them rather than for them. Secondly, because managers knew that my research was about trust, their expectation was that trust would be a theme in my interactions

with them. This paved the way for a thickened description of trust in each case as it allowed for trust to be explicitly addressed both as a feature of organisational practice and of organisation-stakeholder relationships. In proposing this, it is important to note that the focus on trust in each of the research sites meant that trust was more likely to come up as a topic of conversation with participants than it might otherwise have done. Thus the descriptions provided in each case study may, to some extent, have been artificially 'thickened'. The application of the multi-perspectival approach which allowed for analysis of non-verbalised aspects of trust such as context and behaviour does, however, work towards lessening this potential bias.

Regarding my relationships with non-managerial participants with whom I had more limited contact, I was positioned as a researcher collecting data. This analyst-participant relationship was to some extent reliant on goodwill trust (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.2) in that participants needed to be willing to give me the benefit of the doubt that my intentions in collecting data from them were trustworthy. Also significant was that both managers and the stakeholder participants at each research site were required to sign ethics consent forms before I could collect data from them. This suggests that within these relationships a form of 'system trust', as proposed by Luhmann (1979) McKnight *et al* (1998) and Pennington *et al* (2003), and discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.4, was also in play. This occurs because ethics procedures constitute an institutionalised means of conferring trust on a research project and characterising it as trustworthy. Researchers thus arguably embark on their research imbued by its associated ethics procedures with an institutionalised form of trustworthiness.

### **3.4.3.3 The social/institutional perspective**

The social/institutional perspective of the MPF focuses on the macro-social and institutional conditions that influence trust at each of the research sites. Of particular relevance in addressing these conditions are the notions of 'habitus' (see Bourdieu, 1972, 1986, 1992, 1998) and 'institutional order' (Berger & Luckman, 1966).

#### **3.4.3.3.1 The relationship between habitus, institutional order and trust**

To Bourdieu (1977; 1980; 1984; 1986) there is an intricate connection between language and social life so that one cannot be understood without recourse to, and explanation of, the other. As Thompson (1991), writing about Bourdieu, points out:

He [Bourdieu] portrays everyday linguistic exchanges as situated encounters between agents endowed with socially structured resources and competencies in such a way that every linguistic interaction, however, personal and insignificant it may seem, bears traces of the social structure that it both expresses and helps to reproduce. (Thompson, 1991, p. 2)

For Bourdieu, social exchanges draw upon different sets of tacitly held, conventionalised, social and discursive behaviours which lead individuals to behave and act in ways that affirm a particular social order. These conventionalised behaviours are a consequence of what Bourdieu terms 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1972: 1986: 1992).

Habitus is defined as the human disposition to behave and interact and perceive other's behaviours and interactions in certain ways. According to Bourdieu (1972, 1992), habitus arises from a process of 'inculcation' based on our life experiences and is most commonly mediated through discourse. It is as a result of our habitus that we come to possess particular attitudes about the actions and interactions of others. These attitudes are deeply embedded in the human psyche and are consequently hard to break. Bourdieu (1992) also claims that habitus is 'transposable and generative' so that the perceptions that we have of one domain or experience are likely to colour our perceptions, as well as alter other peoples' perceptions, of different domains and experiences. Social and discursive practices are consequently seen to arise from the interplay between habitus and the social context, or what Bourdieu defines as the 'field' or 'marketplace' (Bourdieu, 1992) in which they occur. The marketplace is characterised by Bourdieu as the space in which values (in terms of wordings and other semiotic codings) are negotiated and exchanged. In spite of the view that habitus is entrenched, Bourdieu notes that it can, and does, alter as a result of participants' exposure to a range of 'fields' (Bourdieu, 1992). These fields are typically framed by different intellectual, political, religious, educational, institutional, or cultural orientations.

From the discourse perspective, an understanding of habitus can explain the ways in which parties have been socialised and can also provide insight into why particular social and discursive practices are used and 'trusted' in certain contexts whilst others are not. Study 2 examines trust against the background of a deeply embedded staff habitus which has arisen from Gunz Dental's family business tradition. This case study examines how managers' and employees' habitus both affords and constrains the development of manager-employee trust in the organisation.

Similar to habitus but specifically related to the institutional context, is the construct of 'institutional order'. The connection between institutional order and discourse has been attributed to the work of Berger & Luckman (1966). They theorised that 'institutionalisation' is the outcome of roles, activities and interactions that develop over time within organisations. These elements are taken up and reflected by others until they become embedded and recognised forms of practice. Berger & Luckman define the institutional order as:

the sum totals of what everybody knows about a social world, an assemblage of maxims, morals, proverbial nuggets of wisdom, values and beliefs, myths and so forth – every institution has a body of transmitted recipe knowledge, that is knowledge that supplies the institutionally appropriate rules and conduct.

(Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 83)

Because the ‘institutional order’ focuses on ‘what everybody knows’ it is related to tacit knowledge. The role of the analyst in addressing the social/institutional perspective is to access this knowledge and make it explicit by analysing the way(s) in which participants behave and interact in accordance with accepted organisational way(s) of doing things and what occurs if they do not (Hocking, 2010).

There is a direct relationship between the concept of institutional order and impersonal forms of trust such as system-based and organisation-based trust (see Chapter 2, section 2.4). Evidence of an established institutional order may provoke stakeholders into placing trust in an organisation because it provides them with evidence of ‘situational normality’ (Lewis & Weigart, 1985; McKnight *et al*, 1998): that is, that the institutional order influences the organisation’s social and discursive behaviours, leading it to act in ways that are predictable, reliable and conforming. If stakeholders have the perception that ‘everything seems in proper order’ (Lewis & Weigert, 1985, p. 974) then this is likely to provide them with a sense of security about the organisation and so render the organisation trustworthy. Thus an organisation’s ability to communicate a perception of its institutional order, or ‘situational normality’, plays a role in it being categorised as trustworthy. The discursive representation of ‘situational normality’ is a main focus of the first case study in this thesis.

The counterpoint to institutional order as a trust-carrying construct is that organisations do not all conform to a recognised institutional order. Additionally, some institutional orders may be held to be untrustworthy, or be a source of tension, thus constraining the organisation’s potential for change, creativity and innovation. To a large extent a negative perception of institutional order was responsible in the third case study for community stakeholders’ initial distrust of the community engagement process. A major issue in this context, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, is that the notion of a ‘community stakeholder’ is inherently problematic because it represents an attempt to link two different domains, i.e. the social and the organisational. The outcome is that community engagement practices defy framing by a particular institutional order. Organisational attempts to tightly control community stakeholders, in line with institutionalised ways of doing things, are often distrusted by community participants. In the third case study, the community stakeholders’ prior experiences of community engagement brought them to the CLG (community liaison group) with pre-

conceived and, in this case, negative impressions of institutionalised ways of ‘doing’ community engagement.

The social institutional perspective comprises a large part of each of the three case studies and provides a warrant for many of the claims made about trust in each study. Evaluation of the social institutional perspective is based on different data sources, including a review of literature about the specific organisational domain, my own professional understanding of the world of practitioners and a wide range of ethnographic data collected from each site. The inclusion of this perspective marks the thesis as a whole as grounded in a social constructionist paradigm which views organisation-stakeholder trust as historically and socially mediated.

### **3.4.3.4 The Social Practice Perspective**

The social practice perspective is addressed by describing and interpreting participants’ workplace practices and interactions and examining these in relation to how an organisation’s institutional order, or habitus (section 3.4.3), works to constrain or afford particular practices. In contrast to the social/institutional perspective, this perspective takes a ‘bottom-up’ approach (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). Its focus is on micro-level investigation of the practices and interactions that are commonly taken for granted but which frame the organisation’s ‘professional stocks of interactional knowledge’ (Peräkylä *et al*, 2005; Peräkylä & Vehviläinen, 2003) and comprise the ‘interaction order’ (Goffman, 1964; 1981).

Stocks of interactional knowledge, or SIKs, are defined by Peräkylä & Vehviläinen as the ‘normative models and theories or quasi-theories about interaction’ that form ‘the knowledge base of professional practice’ (2003, p. 730). SIKs are evident in professional texts, training manuals, or in written and spoken training instructions and they also provide the ‘norms’ for explaining and legitimising, or opposing, particular professional practices (Peräkylä & Vehviläinen, 2003, p. 747). The significance to trust of examining SIKs is that they are held by the professions in which they are situated to validate, or make trustworthy, professional frameworks for interaction.

The concept of the interaction order was introduced in section 3.2 but is expanded here to address its specific connection to trust. The notion of ‘interaction order’ is credited to Goffman (1959; 1978; 1981) who contends that it is through enactment of the tacitly held rules of the interaction order that social order and social equilibrium are maintained. Misztal (2001) proposes a direct relationship between the interaction order and trust. This relationship reflects, albeit at the micro-level, the discussion in the preceding section of this chapter (3.4.3) of the

links between institutional order and trust. Misztal suggests that the interaction order represents 'situational normality' at a micro-level of interaction (2001, p 314). Because the interaction order leads people to interact in ways that are predictable, reliable and legitimate, they develop a sense of confidence and trust in interaction and so conform to its tacitly held interactional expectations. To deviate from these expectations is therefore to take risk and to potentially court mistrust. This view is tested in the first case study which examines proposals for work as initiators of trust. Through discursive analysis of proposals which Branham submits to potential clients this study is able to show how Branham takes risk in terms of breaking with the conventionalised 'rules' that characterise the proposal genre, for example, by including 'letters' within its proposals.

Goffman's (1959, 1963, 1981) theory of the interaction order proposes a number of features of interaction that are especially useful in assessing relational trust. In particular is his view of people as simultaneously and strategically balancing 'two selves' in interactional situations; the private and the public self (1959, 1981). Goffman explains the ways in which these two selves are displayed in terms of a dramaturgical metaphor of performance in either the 'frontstage' (public) or 'backstage' (private) arena. These different selves reveal each person's 'face' (Goffman, 1967) so that, when interacting, each person is seen as strategically participating in a performance, the outcome of which is to enhance their 'face' as much as possible. This 'face' is vulnerable to other's perceptions and in interaction we are, according to Goffman, in a continual process of 'face work' or 'mutual monitoring' (Goffman, 1964, p. 134). Face work ensures that we interactionally align ourselves with others to our best advantage and that in turn we maintain particular social or institutional rituals. As Branham, referring to Goffman's theory of face, explains:

We maintain face by following social norms, showing deference for and affirming the dignity of others, and presenting ourselves in accordance with our own places in the status hierarchy. The main function of 'face-work' – interactional work oriented towards affirming and protecting the dignity of social participants – is to maintain the ritual of social life.

(Branham 1997, p. xiii).

Face is thus related to the amount of vulnerability that each person is prepared to take so that the amount of private 'face' that is revealed in interaction has the potential to reveal the extent, or otherwise, of trust in a relationship.

A further aspect of Goffman's work, that has been drawn upon in Case studies 2 and 3 is his theories of frame and footing (see Goffman 1974; 1986). The concept of 'frame' relates to the ways in which we cognitively store and organise our experiences and then structure and act on these in ways that are recognisable to others. Interactions are framed by social and discursive clues so that, according to Goffman (1986), we instinctively know what discourse is appropriate

to a particular frame. If we walk into a board-room and see people sitting around a table with an agenda in front of them and a chairman at the head of the table, we are likely to recognise that a meeting of some kind is taking place. Equally, at a micro-level we are likely to be able to distinguish when people are making a serious point from when they are making a joke. Frames therefore carry meaning within the discourse and are examples of the recognisable 'organization of experience' (Goffman, 1964, p. 155).

Associated with the concept of frame is also the notion of 'footing' (Goffman, 1981). This is defined by Goffman as 'the change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and others present as expressed in the way we manage the production and reception of an utterance' (1981, p. 128). In relation to trust, a consideration of how participants produce and respond to an utterance has the potential to reveal something about the extent to which they align with, or trust, one another. Similarly, changes of footing within an interaction may serve to reveal disagreement, disaffiliation or to move interaction on to issues of a participant's choosing, potentially to save 'face'.

Analysis of shifts in frame and footing thus has the potential to reveal something about the status of trust between participants. In analysing how participants discursively conduct and either progress or abandon their relationships through changes in frame and footing, one is able to assess the extent of affiliation between participants and potentially assess participants' trust of each other. It is important to note that Goffman does not suggest that trust is intrinsic to the notions of frame or footing, or to the interaction order in general, but rather that trust is a potential outcome (Misztal, 2001). In other words, following the tacit rules of the interaction order, and ascribing to its relative predictability, may reinforce people's mutual feeling of trust because in aligning with the interaction order they align with each other.

The social practice perspective is addressed in this research by investigating social and discursive practices which are held, by the research sites, and as a consequence of initial data analysis, to comprise the organisation's trust work. Micro-level DA of this trust work is used to address this perspective and draws on a range of discourse analytic methodologies including conversation analysis (Antaki, 2011), narrative analysis (Holmes, 2005) and humour and laughter analysis (Haakana, 1999; Holmes, 2006; Kangasharju & Nikko, 2009).

### **3.4.3.5 The Semiotic Resource perspective**

The semiotic resource perspective addresses the data sets and resources that are drawn upon in the research. Analysts typically collect more data than it is feasible to address within the context

of research and this perspective also addresses how data is selected and narrowed down to most effectively address research themes and research questions.

In contrast to studies that are focussed on a pre-defined practice such as the business meeting or annual report, the theme of relational trust is not restricted to the collection of a particular type of data. In reality, a wide range of data sources have the potential to reveal something about both the constitutive elements of trust and the factors which might lead to its development. Likewise, as demonstrated in analysis of the illustrative Extracts 3.2 and 3.3 (see sections 3.3 & 3.4.3.2), a single resource can reveal different facets of trust depending on the different analytical tools applied to it.

Although each of the studies comprises a different data set, the overall approach to collection and selection of resources was similar in each case. As discussed in section 3.4.3.1, the research approach was phased and recursive so that the initial phase of data collection and analysis informed the next phase which in turn informed the next phase and so on. This approach is outlined in Table 3.1.

The aim of the recursive approach was to allow for the inclusion of resources which had not previously been considered as relevant by the participants and/or analyst or to allow for consideration and analysis of new resources which had not previously existed. It also offered the opportunity for resources to be self-selecting so that collection and analysis of resources was itself shaped and reshaped by the process of data collection and analysis: that is, the initial phase of data analysis presented other resources as significant or, alternatively, as not relevant for more detailed analysis. In the second case study of Gunz, whilst undertaking a first pass analysis of employee interviews, the relevance of the staff newsletter to the development of trust became apparent and was subsequently considered a key semiotic resource. Further collection and analysis of staff newsletters over a period of eighteen months revealed that the main contributors to these newsletters were employees and executive managers with contributions from mid-line managers progressively diminishing over time. This finding provided the study with evidence of a trust issue at the level of mid-line management and eventuated in a change of focus for this study.

A further advantage of a participatory, reflexive research approach is that it works in tandem with a strengthening of trust in the analyst-participant relationship. As this relationship strengthens, it potentially allows for access to increasingly deeper layers of an organisation. Initial access to publicly available resources evolves to allow access to internal policies, procedures and documentation, and eventually deep access into the organisational experience where participants' evaluative interpretations of practice and reactions to each other are expressed and can be captured (Hirschhorn, 1999). Such a multi-layered research approach

defines semiotic resources as not only concrete, tangible, and often textually defined data but also more abstract emotive and cognitive semiotic resources. Access to these latter resources was of particular importance to researching relational trust in this research.

A further consideration in the semiotic resource perspective is to address how data is selected and narrowed down in order to focus on illustrative and typical examples. Decisions about data may be under the control of the organisation rather than the analyst and related to the availability of resources and personnel. Data selection is discussed in the individual case studies but Table 3.2 (section 3.6) provides an overview of the semiotic resources that are drawn upon to address the different MPF perspectives in each of the studies. This table also lists the methodologies that are applied in each study, the details of which are presented in the following section (3.5).

### **3.5 Methodologies drawn upon in the case studies**

The following sub-sections of 3.5 provide an overview of the main discourse analytic methodologies that have been used in the case studies. Overall the studies, and specifically Studies 2 and 3, reflect many of the characteristics of what Smart (2007) has referred to as 'Ethnographic-based discourse analysis'. However, they diverge from traditional ethnographic studies which examine the general communicative features of a particular community in that they are specifically focussed on the discursive construction of trust.

#### **3.5.1 Ethnographic-based discourse analysis**

Each of the studies in this thesis began with an ethnographic phase. In the case of Study 2, this phase continued for two-and-a-half years and in Study 3 for four-and-a-half years. Ethnography or 'field research' (Cicourel 2007, p. 739) involves direct participation in, or observation of, the social and/or discursive practices of particular social groups. In the context of discourse studies, ethnographic discourse analysis is most often associated with the work of Geertz (1973, 1983) and Hymes (1962). Geertz's aim was to explore the discourse practices of a particular social group and investigate how members conceptualise and operate within a 'mutually constructed conceptual world' (Smart, 2007, p. 56). In contrast, Hymes focus was on the exploration of the verbal routines, conventions and genres that come to structure and typify the communications of particular social groups. Both Geertz's and Hymes's approaches rely on the operation of the researcher as a 'quasi' member of the group under consideration and on the collection of a wide range of data which may include observational field notes, interviews with participants, texts,

focus groups and surveys. Ethnographic research is traditionally recursive and includes repeated cycles of data collection, analysis and reflection that move the researcher towards the production of a 'thick description' of the participants' conceptual world (Geertz, 1983). When applied to discourse analytic studies, thick description should, according to Sarangi and Roberts, include 'fine-grained linguistic analysis' as well as 'broader ethnographic description and wider political and ideological accounts' (1999, p1). Thick description is achieved through implementation of different theoretical frameworks and analytical approaches which can account for both macro and micro-level discourse phenomena.

Ethnographic-based DA in workplace settings is particularly useful for allowing researchers to 'explore and describe in detail the social contexts within which texts are produced, read and used in activities of learning and knowledge making' (Smart, 2007, p. 57). In this thesis my aim was to explore, in each study, how particular practices were instantiated and shaped in line with the organisation's aim of developing its own 'ontological landscape of Trust' (Candlin & Crichton, 2013a, p. 1). To address this general objective and reflect the orientation of ethnographic research, each of the research sites was approached with the aim of collaboratively investigating how participants constructed and oriented to their workplace settings in ways that might be construed as trust generating.

Smart (2007) cautions against claiming discourse analytic studies as ethnographic. His concern is to distinguish between discourse analytic case studies and ethnographic studies. The former is focussed on examination of a small number of participants and their regular routines and practices in a particular setting or, alternatively, it may focus on a single event. In contrast, ethnographic studies are, in Smart's view, concerned with examining the local culture of a particular social group with a view to providing a more holistic account of 'the shared conceptual world that is discursively constructed and maintained by the group' (Smart, 2007, p. 58). By this definition the studies in this thesis are hybrids because they have a specific focus on trust work rather than on a general examination of a community's or, in this case, an organisation's, social and discursive practices.

A further consideration with ethnographic approaches is the length of time needed to define a study as ethnographic. According to Geertz, the researcher must 'swim in the stream of the subject's experience' (1983, p. 58) to gain a deep and broad understanding of the group's discursive practices from the perspective of an 'insider'. The question therefore arises of how long this will take. Is a day, a week, a month, a year, or even a decade sufficient to be able to characterise a study as ethnographic? The aim of prolonged engagement with a group is to extract 'significant areas of intersubjectivity' (Smart 2007, p. 60) and to find evidence of shared

perceptions and alignments. This is potentially only possible if the researcher is herself aligned with the group's members and is also more likely if she has prior professional knowledge and expertise in the area of research. Although this may be an argument for more discourse studies to be undertaken by practitioners who are already furnished with a conceptual understanding of the world(s) of their participants, the notion of an 'expert' researcher raises the challenge of maintaining research objectivity and establishing effective participant relationships. These challenges were addressed in this thesis in the discussion of Sarangi's (2000) notion of the 'analyst's paradox' in section 3.4.3.1.

An ethnographic approach to research provides the discourse analyst with the potential for a richer and more holistic interpretation of the workplace. It not only affords the opportunity to study those who may be responsible for regulating the workplace, such as managers and professional personnel, but also those who work within these regulated structures such as the employees, suppliers, or clients. The three case studies in this thesis rely heavily on the ethnographic approach to discourse analysis which, in each case, generated a considerable amount of data in the form of organisational documentation, observational field notes and participant interviews. The ethnographic approach also provided access to 'insider knowledge' and the 'stocks of professional interactional knowledge', which had shaped both the macro-social and institutional contexts of the research organisations as well as the interpretative worlds of their respective participants.

### **3.5.2 Conversation Analysis**

Conversation analysis (CA) provides essential tools for the linguistic and discursive analysis of interactional data and is specifically used in Case study 3. CA has its roots in sociology and specifically 'ethnomethodology', a field of enquiry which is commonly associated with the work of Garfinkel (1967). The aim of ethnomethodology is to understand how people in various cultures come to share a common understanding of the world around them through their use of a repertoire of interpretive procedures and common understandings. Although originally developed to address and account for the orderliness of everyday talk, CA is now also applied to the analysis of talk in workplace settings as evidenced in the work of, amongst others, Antaki (2011).

The main focus of CA is on how language use is structured in interaction. Characteristic of this approach is the fine-grained analysis of transcriptions of naturally occurring interactions to address questions such as:

How do you and I bring off the business we transact with each other? How do I design my turns at talk to perform some action, and to make your turn and next action fit a certain range of possible shapes? How, in short, does any pair or group of people use language to conjure up the social world of which they're a part?

(Antaki, 2011 p.2)

Such questions are premised on the belief that talk-in-interaction is structured and regulated by rules such as turn-taking or regularities that afford or constrain the sequencing of conversations. These rules and regularities are held to be intuitive and to operate below the level of consciousness.

Conversation analysts who adhered to CA's ethnomethodological roots in the 1960s and early 1970s (e.g. Sachs 1967; Schegloff 1968, 1972; Sacks *et al* 1974) analysed talk in interaction as separate from its contexts of use viewing it, in Cameron's terms, as an 'autonomous system' (Cameron, 2001). Their belief was that social action occurs as a result of parties constructing and organising their turns at talk in ways that conform to a set of 'normative expectations' of what is to follow (Antaki, 2011 p.2) and that parties may choose, whilst interacting, to either abide by or flout these normative 'rules'. The outcome of this is the universally understood 'interaction order' (Goffman, 1974) which was previously discussed in section 3.4.3.4.

Since the 1970s, more 'applied' CA studies have begun to emerge (e.g. Drew & Heritage 1992; Heritage & Maynard, 2006) which are focussed on institutions and how they are 'talked into being' (Heritage, 1984, p. 290). More recently, a number of 'applied' CA approaches are attempting to practically address social problems. For example, 'communicational applied CA' (Antaki, 2011) has examined incidences of disordered talk in people suffering with autism, aphasia or learning disabilities. 'Interventionist applied CA' has been used to assist organisations that are experiencing communication related difficulties (Antaki, 2011). These and other applied approaches, although still focussing their analysis at the micro-level of interaction, have significantly started to employ ethnographic data to frame an understanding of how the organisation under investigation orients itself to the issues being researched. To justify the inclusion of this type of data, Antaki (2011) notes that:

The fact that participants will be bringing off some recordable institutional achievement means that the analyst will have to get a grip on what the institution counts as an achievement...Only ethnographic background gleaned from documents, interviews and observation of the site will provide that.

(Antaki, 2011, p.12).

Interventionist applied CA has generally focused on solving problems that pre-exist the arrival of a discourse 'expert' (Antaki, 2011). This interventionist approach is reflected in the second

case study in this thesis in which Gunz Dental found itself faltering in the implementation of its trust strategy and to some extent sought, via this research, the means to address this.

A number of tools and techniques have been adopted from CA in the three case studies. These have allowed for analysis of particular features in the interactional data such as prosodic features, lexical choice and the co-construction of participant turns. These and other discursive features can help to illuminate how trust might be held to be constructed and displayed in interaction. It should be noted, however, that in contrast to what Ten Have (2007) terms ‘pure’ theoretically oriented CA, the insights in this present study are discussed against an understanding of the social, organisational, and participant context(s) from which they emerge.

### **3.5.3 Mediated discourse analysis**

Mediated discourse analysis (MDA) can be broadly defined as the attempt to integrate discourse with social action. MDA is used in the second study which is specifically concerned with the ways in which Gunz’s trust strategy mediates (dis)trust.

Scollon (1998), one of the foremost proponents of MDA, explains that MDA’s focus is on:

mediated action and how a social actor takes action through the use of some mediational means. Discourse in this view is seen as a kind of mediated action. Discourse is language in use, but we do not mean language ‘in general’ or abstractly we mean some particular word, sentence phrase, intonation or perhaps a genre that is appropriated by a social actor to accomplish a specific action at a specific place and in a concrete moment. In this view discourse is not just the action, not just the language; it is the bit of language as it is used in taking action.

(Scollon 1998, p. 21)

MDA views discourse as a tool but not necessarily the tool through which participants take action and consequently approaches its analysis as part of ‘what is going on’ (Goffman, 1974). MDA seeks to analyse the ways in which a range of ‘tools’ which, as Wertsch (1998) argues, may include, objects, technologies, practices, specific institutions, or communities, as well as their discourses, can operate together to afford or constrain particular practices. In considering this, MDA takes account of the wider social and institutional context in which action occurs because as Norris and Jones (2005a) point out ‘These tools come with histories that have shaped the kind of things that can be done with them and the kinds of things that cannot: that is they embody certain affordances and constraints’ (2005a, p. 5). In this respect, MDA is linked to ethnographic DA which also examines the macro-social and institutional contexts of interaction and the effects of these on practice.

MDA is particularly associated with the theoretical concepts of 'sites of engagement' and the 'nexus of practice'. 'Sites of engagement' are defined within MDA as the point at which a number of practices intersect to create a distinct social action. As Scollon (2001) explains:

A site of engagement is defined as the convergence of social practices in a moment in real time which opens a window for mediated action to occur...the concept of site of engagement focuses upon the social practices which enable the moment of mediated action.

(Scollon, 2001 p. 147)

If one considers trust as developmental and as the outcome of participants' experiences with various social and institutional practices then the notion of sites of engagement allows for consideration of those practices in which trust is displayed and investigation of the practices which have led to this display. Trust might be on show through a pat on the back from a colleague or through sharing a personal story with a friend. These trust displaying actions are most likely the outcome of prior actions and interactions which have been mutually experienced and positively evaluated by participants (see Chapter 2, section 2.8).

A 'nexus of practice' is the point at which practices become recognised as part of the 'same' group of actions. As Scollon (2001) elaborates, 'The concept of the nexus of practice simultaneously signifies a genre of activity and the group of people who engage in that activity' (Scollon, 2001, p.150). Identification of a nexus of practice therefore becomes a way of identifying certain actions, or people, as belonging to the same 'set'. In Case study 2 one of the ways of evaluating Gunz's trust strategy is to examine the extent to which it can be defined as a 'nexus' of trust enhancing practices and to specifically examine how these practices have mediated the development of trust at Gunz.

A further specific appeal of MDA to this research is that it reinforces the conceptualisation of trust that frames this thesis. This conceptualisation crucially proposes that trust is something that we do, i.e. trust is 'actionable' (Candlin & Crichton, 2013a, p. 20) rather than as something that we have. This is to suggest that even if trust is already present in a relationship, it needs to be nurtured through trust-enabling practices and interactions to allow it to transform into deeper forms of relational trust such as 'identification-based trust' (see Chapter 2, section 2.5). In line with this approach, CA and MDA share an interest in the ways in which people construct and manage their interactions in order to take up particular positions in their relationships with one another. However, in contrast to CA, MDA does not privilege discourse but rather examines a range of semiotic resources that may influence the development of relationships while also allowing for contextual factors to be taken into account. In the second case study, although discourse, defined as the language of the TBS, is crucial to mediating trust so too are other

social practices which frame the use of this language. MDA considers these practices as well as the ‘tools’ that mediate them.

### **3.5.4 Genre analysis**

Although I do not claim to make comprehensive use of the analytic methods associated with genre analysis, this method proves useful to explaining the conventionalised ‘rules’ and trust-generating properties of business proposals in the first case study.

Genre analysis has made an important contribution to the study of discourse in organisational settings in the work of, for example, Bargiella-Chiappini & Harris (1997) Orlikowski & Yates (1994) Bhatia (2008, 2010) and Bazerman & Russell (2003). An influential definition of genre, based on analyses of academic research articles, suggests that it is ‘a more or less standardised form of communicative event with a goal or a set of goals mutually understood by the participants in that event’ (Swales, 1981, p. 10). This conception of genre has resulted in a wide range of ‘genre studies’ which have focused on the description of recurring structural features and linguistic characteristics that are held to typify particular genres. The focus of the majority of these studies is on investigation of written texts (e.g. Orlikowski & Yates, 1994; Bhatia, 2004).

As genre studies have evolved, researchers have taken a more complex view of genre and its role in social and organisational practices. Orlikowski & Yates (1994) proposed that the main genres in use in workplace settings constitute an organisation’s ‘genre repertoire’ and that this repertoire is predictive of how an organisation is structured and operates. Expanding on this theory, Smart proposed that workplace genres typically operate together in ‘sets’ and operate within these sets as a form of ‘socio-rhetorical action’ (Smart, 2003, p. 14) which is oriented towards accomplishing specific goal-directed activities.

With the increasing spread of technology and the production of texts through new media, the view of genre as conventionally structured and linguistically predictable has come under pressure and can neither account for situations in which similar textual features occur across genres nor for genres that are simultaneously performing several communicative functions. Kress (2003) notes that as genre studies have traditionally centred on ‘old media’, or linguistically mono-modal texts, they have been ill equipped to take account of texts generated through new media such as websites or promotional brochures which include non-linguistic features and are typically multi-modal. In relation to this, Kress critically notes that ‘there are no genre-terms for describing what [a] drawing is or what it does’ (Kress, 2003. p. 110).

A further issue with the more traditional definitions of genre is that, in the contemporary organisation, practitioners increasingly combine different discourses as they go about their work. This results in both spoken and written genres that are hybridised or that display intertextuality and cut across conventional genre boundaries (Bhatia, 2010). A simple example is, as Bargiella-Chiappini *et al* (2007) note, the combination of spoken and written discourse that is characteristic of emails. This feature is evident in the business proposals analysed in the first case study in this thesis.

‘Intertextuality’ has been a significant consideration in genre-based studies (see Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Swales, 2004; Bhatia, 2004) with Bhatia defining it in terms of the appropriation of ‘text-internal resources’ (Bhatia, 2010, p34) and Fairclough (2003) defining it as the relationship between texts (see also section 3.4.2). Bhatia (2008) is, however, notably critical of the overreliance in genre studies on ‘inter-textual’ relationships as opposed to ‘inter-discursive’ relations. Although these two terms are often linked in genre studies they emerge, according to Bhatia (2004), from different research orientations which emphasise the text in the case of intertextuality and the discourse of social and discursive practice in the case of interdiscursivity. As Bhatia explains:

Appropriations across texts give rise to intertextual relations whereas appropriations across professional genres, practices and cultures constitute interdiscursive relations’  
(Bhatia, 2010, p. 35).

More recent approaches to genre research support a broader, interdiscursive approach to genre studies proposing that genres cannot be explained simply through analysis of their textual features and/or communicative purpose. This emerging view of genres typically characterises genres as dynamic and as recognisable forms of ‘social action’ (e.g. Bargiella-Chiappini & Nickerson, 1999; Bhatia, 2010). Such an approach does not preclude analysis of the textual features or communicative function of genres but rather seeks to understand how and why genres are produced. In addressing this, genre theory also orients towards identification of typical and common SIK’s (Peräkylä *et al*, 2005; Peräkylä & Vehviläinen, 2003) that participants draw upon when choosing to employ or modify a particular genre. As Yeung explains in relation to participant selection of a particular genre:

Typical features and their variations in both rhetorical function and form can be seen as manifestations and adaptations of the stock of social knowledge that participants draw on when they select a genre which they deem as appropriate for a particular communicative situation.  
(Yeung, 2007, p.158)

Although focussing here on the ‘appropriacy of genre selection’, Yeung’s comment provides general support for the examination of genre in relation to trust. The notion of ‘appropriacy’ in genre selection raises the issue of conformity to expectations. Looking to the first case study, Branham’s choice to submit proposals for work to prospective clients is entirely appropriate and in keeping with organisationally accepted ‘norms’ inherent to the processes of tendering for work. In other words, this practice is conforming to the expectations of prospective clients and is thus potentially enabling of their trust.

The view that particular SIKs drive both adaptation and variation in genre is also related to assessing both the trustworthiness of these stocks of knowledge and in turn how they might be shaped to court trust. Again in the first case study, Branham is a newly established organisation seeking to legitimise the new field of practice of sustainability assurance and to identify itself as a trustworthy organisation. Therefore, the choices that Branham makes in constructing its proposals, the SIKs and resources it draws upon, the way(s) in which these conform to or are adapted for Branham’s own use, and the extent to which Branham takes risks in light of the genre expectations associated with proposals are potentially, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, indicative of the ways in which Branham courts, or otherwise, client trust.

### **3.6 Application of the MPF to the three studies**

A summary of this chapter is best presented by reference to Table 3.2. This table provides an overview of how the MPF has been applied in each of the case studies. It shows how the perspectives have been addressed in each study, the semiotic resources that have been drawn upon to address the perspectives and the methodologies employed in each case. Table 3.2 does not show all of the semiotic resources collected in each study but rather what has been drawn upon to ethnographically shape the study as well as what has been explicitly analysed in each study.

**Table 3.2 The resources drawn upon to address the MPF perspectives**

<b>Perspective</b>	<b>Study 1</b>	<b>Study 2</b>	<b>Study 3</b>	<b>Analyst's perspective</b>
<b>Social/Institutional</b>	Historical and contextual information on social auditing  Company website including Branham's own sustainability reports  Informal discussions with consultants	Background information on Gunz including company website, annual reports, values and mission statements  Internal newsletters  Documentation on the trust strategy	Practitioner information on stakeholder engagement  Background documentation to project  Meeting data: e.g. participation protocol, agenda, minutes	Informed by 15+ years' experience as a communications consultant specializing in stakeholder engagement
<b>Social/ Practice perspective</b>	Proposals for work	Feedback channels: staff newsletter/suggestion box/email.  Participant interviews	Community liaison group meetings	
<b>Participants' perspective</b>	Interview and discussions with Managing Director	Interviews and discussions with Executive managers, managers, employees and the trust consultant	Interview with Community Relations manager  Informal discussions with group facilitator, participants, and members of the project team	
<b>Semiotic resource perspective</b>	Proposals for work  Company website  Participant interview	Participant interviews Newsletters Documentation on the trust strategy Company website Observations and field notes	Audiotapes of 4 x meetings  General project information and meeting data Observations and field notes Participant interview	
<b>Methodology</b>	Ethnographic DA  Genre analysis	Ethnographic DA  MDA  Interventionist applied CA	Ethnographic DA  Narrative analysis	



## **Part 2: Three case studies**

‘Here we drink three cups of tea to do business: the first you are a stranger, the second you become a friend and the third you join our family, and for our family we are prepared to do anything – even die’

Balti Proverb  
Haji Ali  
Korphe Village Chief  
Karakoram Mountains  
Pakistan.

Mortensen & Relin (2006)

## Preface to Part 2

This preamble sets the scene for the three case studies which follow. It raises a number of general points to be considered when reading the individual case studies.

Practitioners working in organisational communications consistently seek innovative ways through which to express complex organisational concepts as simplified, bite-sized messages. Mnemonics, abbreviations, tag lines, metaphors, graphics and pithy phrases are often used to explain complex communications issues to the layperson. Although from an academic perspective these ‘essentials’ of a communications’ practitioner’s tool-kit are viewed as vast over-simplifications of what are complex linguistic and discursive fields of enquiry, their use in industry is nevertheless widespread. From a practitioner perspective, I too seek ways to make my academic research readily accessible to the recipients of my consultancy services. In light of this, I have chosen to draw on the Balti proverb of ‘Three Cups of Tea’<sup>1</sup> to explain the overall connections between the three case studies in this thesis.

The studies are not presented in the order in which they were researched but rather as representing a trajectory of relational trust. The Balti proverb of the ‘Three Cups of Tea’ appositely explains this trajectory. Each of the studies in this thesis is analogous to one of the three cups of tea. The first case focuses on the initiation of organisation-stakeholder trust between relative strangers. The second case study examines the development of trust between managers and employees who are friends. This second study highlights the complexities that can ensue for trust once friendship is established. The third case study examines a case of established trust and shows how it is based on close interpersonal relationships and affective ties. Although each of the three studies focuses on the discursive construction of trust within the individual research site, I return to the analogy of the ‘Three Cups of Tea’ in Part 3 of this thesis and draw general conclusions about how a trajectory of organisation-stakeholder trust, with stages corresponding to each of the cups of tea, can be discursively represented.

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<sup>1</sup> The Balti proverb ‘Three Cups of Tea’ is taken from a book of the same name. This autobiography of ex- mountaineer Greg Mortensen tells how, after failing to scale the world’s second highest mountain K2, Mortensen became lost in the Pakistani foothills. Wandering into the poor village of Korphe on the Pakistan-Afghan border, the chief Haji Ali and his Balti people took Mortensen in and nursed him back to health. To repay their kindness, Mortensen later returned to Korphe and built a school for the village children, the first of many that were built in this part of the world by the charity that Mortensen later founded; the Central Asia Institute. ‘Three Cups of Tea’ is essentially a story of trust building and I draw on this Balti proverb as a way to conceptualise the connections between the three case studies in this thesis and to denote the developmental trajectory of relational trust.

Each of the case studies represents the culmination of a prolonged period of research with the selected research organisation. The description and explanation of relational trust presented in each study has been ‘thickened up’ by considering relational trust through different perspectives of the MPF as shown in Chapter 3, Table 3.2. The studies do not, however, account for the totality of trust in each organisation. Inevitably, there are other stakeholder relationships that are also significant to the research sites but that were not a prime focus of trust work at the time at which each of the present studies were conducted. Each of the case studies therefore presents only a partial view of trust at each site. However, this partial view is far more than just a ‘snapshot’ (Lewicki *et al*, 2006) of trust and the studies also provide insight into the dynamic nature of trust as it has grown, or indeed declined, over time within the organisation-stakeholder relationships in focus, as well as making the link between this development and trust work.

It is important when reading the studies that each is considered in its own right and as a 'stand-alone' example of situated practice. This occurs because the trust work discussed in each case is an outcome of the unique social and institutional contexts and associated influences which have shaped participants’ perceptions of trust and the purpose(s) for developing trust at each research site. Researchers who are hoping to extract from these studies a formula, or in Parkhe’s (1993) terms the ‘recipe’, for relational trust are likely to be disappointed. Although in the previous chapter I have provided a general overview of the typical trajectory that relational trust follows (see Chapter 2, Figure 2.1) to provide a further reductionist model of trust work, based on each of the studies, would be to ignore the uniqueness and complexity of trust as it operates *in situ*. Trust work is a highly complex and dynamic phenomenon and, as I argue throughout this thesis and reiterate in the concluding chapter (Chapter 7), cannot be understood in isolation from the myriad of variables that influence its realisation and which do so not ‘in the moment’ but over an extended period of time. Consequently, this research does not leave the reader with another 'snapshot' or easy-to-access model of trust. Rather, it argues for a mixed methods and case study approach to trust research. Readers are thus cautioned against taking the findings from the three studies out of context. In spite of the necessity to treat each of the studies as unique, there are a number of similarities in the approach taken to the studies which I will address in the remainder of this preface.

Each of the case studies is the result of collaboration with the main participants at each of the research sites. The rationale for this collaborative approach was, as previously stated, to accomplish outcomes of practical relevance both for myself as researcher and for the organisation as trust-developer. In order to operationalise this participatory approach, the research agenda was not tightly defined at the start of each study. Data collection and analysis were approached with the broad aim of examining relational trust as opposed to other forms of

trust such as product-based trust. The studies did not, therefore, set out to empirically prove or disprove any particular trust theory. Even though one of the outcomes of the case studies has been the provision of empirical support for several different trust theories this was incidental rather than pre-planned.

Each case was framed overall by Eysenck's (1972) approach to case study research and was thus premised on the view that 'sometimes we simply have to keep our eyes open and look carefully at individual cases –not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something' (1976, p. 9). Despite each case being focused on a particular stakeholder group, data collection was not solely centred on investigation of the social and discursive practices associated with this group. The research approach that was taken in each case (see Chapter 3, Table 3.1) also involved observation and analysis of the organisation's routine communicative and behavioural practices so that the influence of the organisational context on specific organisation-stakeholder trust work practices could be accounted for. Each of the studies thus includes broad ethnographic description of the field of practice, explanation of the contextual conditions at each of the research sites and also incorporates fine-grained linguistic analysis of data. Data was progressively collected and collaboratively selected as being pertinent to interpreting trust work at each research site. Selected data was then subject to fine-grained linguistic analysis which I conducted. Validation of findings from this fine-grained analysis was undertaken by triangulating different data sources and through collaborative reflection on findings with my research participants.

The transcription symbols used for the micro-level linguistic analysis of data in each of the studies are based on the system popularised by Gail Jefferson (1984) and are included and glossed in Appendix 1 of this thesis.

## **Case study 1**

### **Initiating trust in organisation-client relationships**

**‘Here we drink three cups of tea to do business: the first you are a stranger,**  
the second you become a friend and the third you join our family, and for our family we are  
prepared to do anything—even die’

Mortensen & Relin (2006)

## Chapter 4

...fundamentally a relationship works or fails upon a foundation of trust and if you haven't got that foundation you are not really going to have a very productive relationship.

Director, Branhams.

### 4.1 Overview of case study

This study examines how trust is discursively initiated in organisation-client relationships. Specifically, it examines how business proposals submitted to prospective clients by Branhams serve to initiate trust in these relationships. The beginning of organisational relationships is held to be 'the most critical time frame for organisational participants to develop trust' (McKnight *et al* 1998, p. 473). If a relationship is not evaluated positively by participants from its inception, then the crucial 'foundation of trust', referred to by Branhams' Director in the opening excerpt, risks remaining elusive. The start of an organisational relationship is not always mediated through face-to-face interaction and may rely on written media such as emails, job applications, or business proposals. These textual media therefore have a crucial role to play in ensuring that a relationship is placed on a trust-based footing. The discursive accomplishment of this trust-based footing, as undertaken through the written media of business proposals, is the main focus of this case study.

Branhams is a consultancy that provides organisations with sustainability advice and assurance of their sustainability performance and reporting. This field of practice, which is defined in section 4.3, is especially relevant to a study of initial trust because it is new and still seeking professional and corporate legitimacy. Branhams is also in the start-up phase of operations and as such it has neither an established industry reputation nor a recognised organisational identity on which to draw when initiating relationships with prospective clients. In seeking to acquire work and establish a sustainable client base, often through the submission of a proposal for work, Branhams is therefore seeking to establish three different types of trust: trust in the field of CSR and its associated practices, trust in itself as a new organisation, and trust in Branhams' consultants and their ability to provide sustainability services.

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between the linguistic and discursive features of Branhams' proposals and the initiation of client trust. This relationship is warranted in this study by focussing on proposals that eventuated in work for Branhams, and which, in this case, clearly played a part in the initiation of client trust. The analysis of these successful proposals is undertaken using the MPF framework, which was presented in Chapter 3, and

considers the social and institutional context in which Branhams operates, participant input and secondary sources of data taken from Branhams' website.

The practices incorporated in sustainability advice and assurance fall under the generic term of corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR places the onus on corporations to serve the public interest by integrating social and environmental concerns into their operations. CSR is framed by moral rather than legal obligation and remains formally unregulated and predominantly voluntary. As discussed in the following section of this study (4.2) this renders Branhams as working in a 'highly contested field of corporate thinking and practice' (Kemp, 2005, p. 110).

The study is organised to first critically evaluate the socio-cultural and socio-political contexts from which CSR has emerged (section 4.2) and to provide an overview of practices associated with sustainability assurance (section 4.3). I then introduce Branhams (section 4.4) and provide an overview of my relationship with this organisation and details of the study's data set (sections 4.4.1 & 4.4.2). Presentation and discussion of findings first shows how trust is conceptualised at Branhams (section 4.5.1) and then reveals how the types of trust of most significance to Branhams, namely, institutional trust (section 4.6), organisational trust (section 4.7) and interpersonal trust (section 4.8) are discursively constructed. Section 4.9 summarises the main points of the study and section 4.10 discusses the study's limitations and its implications for future research. The study's practical relevance is discussed in Chapter 7.

## **4.2 The social/institutional perspective**

The discussion in the following sub-sections of 4.2 is based on corporate social responsibility literature taken from a range of disciplines including management studies, organisational studies, environmental studies, ethics and sociology. It is also informed by my own practitioner perspective, from discussions with Branhams' Director and consultants, as well as from academic and industry-based articles and documentation available via Branhams' website.

### **4.2.1 Defining corporate social responsibility (CSR)**

The birth of CSR is attributed to the Brundtland report entitled 'Our Common Future' (WECD, 1987). This report formed the basis of discussion at the United Nations 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This summit was significant for redefining the term 'sustainable development' to mean consideration of not just environmental but also the social impacts of development. Most significantly the Brundtland report, for the first time, called for an integrated partnership approach to sustainable development to include not only government but

also society and industry. The outcome for industry was the field of practice now known as corporate social responsibility (CSR). Inherent to the concept of CSR is the view that a consideration of social and environmental impacts should be integrated with corporate strategy and management systems (for more on this point see Dunphy *et al*, 2007; Gao & Zhang, 2006; Pedersen & Neergaard, 2008).

CSR discourse subsumes a plethora of broadly related terms which, amongst others, includes corporate citizenship, corporate responsibility, responsible business practices, sustainably responsible business and corporate social performance. Some confusion remains about the use of the terms ‘corporate citizenship’ and ‘corporate social responsibility’. Some scholars use the two synonymously (e.g. Swanson & Niehoff, 2001; Waddock, 2001; Burchell & Cook, 2006) whilst others suggest that corporate citizenship focuses on internal organisational values whereas CSR focuses on external corporate behaviour (Birch, 2001; Wood & Logsdon, 2001). Davenport (2000) extends this debate by suggesting that CSR and corporate citizenship indicate two separate orientations to the topic with ‘corporate citizenship’ being favoured by practitioners in the field and CSR by the academic community. As this study is not focussed on a philosophical discussion of this debate, the two terms are used synonymously in this study.

Whichever term is used to define CSR, what underpins this trend is the quest for a new organisational paradigm in which organisations are obliged to consider and include a broad range of stakeholder views in their planning and decision-making (Zadek, 2006; AccountAbility, 2007). It is this stakeholder perspective that is the basis of all CSR approaches and stakeholder engagement is the tool through which such approaches are most commonly implemented. The concepts of stakeholder engagement and CSR are the cornerstone of what Lozano (2005) refers to as the ‘relational’ organisation and the three terms are thus intimately linked.

CSR remains, to date, a largely unregulated and voluntary practice. As such, it has been described as a form of corporate self-regulation. Definitions of CSR tend to be somewhat disparate or vague but the European Union Green Paper on CSR defines it as ‘a concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute to a better society and a cleaner environment’ (EU, July 2001, p. 5). Expanding on how this is operationalised, the paper further suggests that CSR allows companies to ‘integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis’ (EU, 2001, p. 7).

In spite of its voluntary nature, the widespread acceptance of CSR has made it both a moral and commercial imperative for organisations to consider. To aid with its implementation several sets of globally accepted guidelines have been developed (see Appendix 3) which outline how organisations might approach CSR and what might be included. Most prominent amongst these guidelines are the GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) and the AA1000 assurance series (see Appendix 2) both of which are used by Branhams. The difference between these two sets of guidelines is mainly one of focus. The GRI proposes the areas of sustainability that a company may wish to highlight whereas the AA1000 is focussed more on the standards required to implement sustainability measures. Importantly, both sets of guidelines emphasise the necessity of stakeholder input and both have an in-built requirement for verification of sustainability initiatives or, in other words, for auditing and assurance of CSR programs.

Whichever guidelines are followed, the tangible outcome of CSR is usually a report. These are variously referred to as sustainability reports, CSR reports, corporate citizenship reports or an equivalent title. In many cases, these reports have superseded the more traditional business or financial report. The main focus of Branhams' consulting services is to audit, assure and provide input into these reports as well as the processes and procedures through which they are generated.

#### **4.2.2 Critiques of CSR**

CSR remains a highly controversial corporate practice and its value has been debated from many different perspectives. Although it is not the intention of this study to debate the merits, or otherwise, of CSR, an overview of the most significant of these debates is provided by way of explaining the complexity of the sustainability services profession of which Branhams is a part and the background against which Branhams needs to build trust. This, in turn, also addresses the social and institutional perspective of the MPF research framework outlined in Chapter 3.

##### **4.2.2.1 Economic critiques**

It is the 1976 Nobel memorial prize winner for economic science, Milton Friedman, who is arguably the most well-known critic of CSR (see Banerjee, 2008; Zadek, 2006 for more on this topic). Friedman was of the opinion that organisations should exist only to produce a profit for their shareholders. In his now infamous criticism of the CSR movement he stated that:

Few trends could so thoroughly undermine the very foundations of our free society as the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their shareholders as possible. (Friedman, 1962, p. 133)

He further argued that if managers implemented CSR, they did so merely as a way of furthering their own social, political, or career agendas and at the expense of shareholders: a view also put forward by McWilliams & Siegel (2001). Although Friedman's dismissal of CSR is now seen as somewhat passé, his opinion forms the basis of many anti-CSR debates.

Some scholars have suggested that organisations will only devote financial resources to CSR if they believe that its economic benefits outweigh its costs (e.g. Unerman & O'Dwyer, 2007; Glazebrook, 2006). This relates to the view of some scholars that CSR is an economically motivated strategy through which organisations endeavour to develop and maintain a competitive market advantage (see Russo & Fouts, 1997; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Martin, 2002). Others regard this latter argument as flawed, claiming that the high profile of CSR means that its practices and processes are widely known, can be easily duplicated and consequently do not provide the means for advantage (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; Banerjee, 2008). An alternative but related view from Henderson's controversial book 'Misguided Virtue' (2001) proposes that CSR is responsible for the imposition of worldwide organisational standards and practices. This, Henderson claims, has the potential to harm companies by threatening opportunities for differentiation and competitive advantage (2001). He further suggests that companies seeking to enact CSR are in reality likely to face higher product and operating costs as an outcome of its implementation, a view which would also appear to render the argument that CSR results in competitive advantage invalid.

In contrast to these debates, an increasing number of studies are attempting to show a positive link between CSR and strong financial performance. Research by McWilliams & Siegel (2001) and Pava & Krausz (1996) takes this view and concludes that adoption of CSR can lead to improved financial performance. Scholtens (2008) argues that a positive financial outcome from CSR is only possible in companies that already have a proven track record of sound financial performance. Of particular note in this debate is the 2003 paper by Margolis and Walsh. They examine 127 empirical studies, conducted between 1972-2002, which claimed to measure the relationship between CSR and financial performance and conclude that in approximately 50% of these studies the relationship between CSR and financial performance was positive. Perhaps most significant in the economically fuelled debates is the fact that, as Margolis & Walsh (2003) and Banerjee (2008) point out, no scholar has as yet been able to prove a negative link between CSR and corporate financial performance!

#### 4.2.2.2 Political critiques

Some critics of CSR such as Kallio (2006) see it as a politically motivated movement and merely a way of quietening environmental groups who appear to be gaining increasing global credibility. Others claim that CSR is just a way of pursuing social legitimacy for business (Levy, 1997). Underpinning political critiques is commonly the notion of ‘greenwashing’. This proposes that corporations focus on the promotion of a veneer of social responsibility and a socially acceptable ‘green’ image rather than being genuinely interested in pursuing a CSR approach. In support of this Levy suggests that:

an analysis of corporate environmentalism reveals the presence of economic and political forces prepared to devote considerable resources to shape the ‘meaning of greening’ to suit their own interests.

(Levy, 1997, p. 136).

This, according to some scholars, is also evidenced by the growing number of full-time environmental or ‘sustainability’ managers that companies now hire to promote CSR as well as the seemingly infinite resources that Kallio (2006) notes are poured into CSR products and processes.

A more controversial view of ‘greenwashing’ suggests that, paradoxically, it is a direct outcome of CSR. Kallio (2006) explains that CSR has rendered certain issues so generally socially accepted that it has become very difficult to question them. For example, it would now be very hard for a CEO to question the whole concept of his company needing to consider its social responsibility. Kallio further claims that the result of this acceptability of CSR ‘norms’ is that certain aspects of CSR are taboo and no longer open for public discussion. This, in his view, results in their being suppressed in CSR discourses or talked about in increasingly abstract ways so as to make a company look increasingly green and responsible (2006, p. 173).

In line with this is Kallio’s discussion of the ‘taboo of continuous growth’ in CSR. The Brundtland report *Our Common Future* that was a main focus of the 1992 Rio Summit (see section 4.2 .1) supported a view that economic growth and environmental protection are mutually compatible. Kallio questions this and proposes that in reality the two are not mutually sustainable. Quoting the WWF Living Planet report which states that:

It is in essence an indisputable fact that population growth together with growth in consumption creates a formula that is not only the seed of most environmental problems but also an absolutely impossible long-term trend in the finite system.

(WWF, 2004 in Kallio, 2006, p. 169)

Kallio notes that the point is not that all growth is necessarily a bad thing, but rather that the issue of continuous growth has been largely ignored in the implementation of CSR.

#### **4.2.3 CSR discourse and trust**

Further critiques of CSR tend to focus on its discourse(s). Underlining this is the view that because of the pressure on organisations to be more accountable and transparent, CSR discourse has been adjusted so as to be palatable to the majority of stakeholders. This can be seen in the relatively informal style of CSR reports as opposed to the more formal style of the traditional business report. CSR reports are also inherently inter-discursive bringing together, as they do, social, environmental and economically motivated discourses. Scholars such as Bhatia (2012) and Lischinsky (2011) have also researched and discussed this phenomenon.

The main purpose of a traditional annual business report is to inform shareholders about a company's economic performance, its state of financial health and its future prospects. These reports have typically employed management, accounting, economic and business-oriented discourses that often rely on statistical, numerical, or technical data. As Bhatia (2010) notes, these 'disclosure' documents appear to be currently changing their function from one that primarily informs and reports, to one that also promotes. He argues that this is accomplished through 'a strategic underplaying of corporate weaknesses, often "bending" the norms of corporate disclosure genres' (2010, p. 39). It could be argued that this change represents an aligning of the traditional annual report and the CSR report.

In contrast to the corporate annual report, the main purpose of a CSR report is to inform all stakeholders, including shareholders, about the social, environmental, and economic performance of a company as well as to disclose how each of these aspects has been influenced by stakeholders. CSR reports are written with a stakeholder rather than a shareholder audience in mind, an orientation which is demonstrated by their interdiscursive construction and the blending of a number of different discourses. CSR reports, for example, generally favour a more informal and interpersonal style which may include narratives, personal accounts, photographs, pictures and colourful graphics. In CSR reports there is far less reliance on quantitative and technically focussed discourse and where this is included, it is likely to be in a simplified form when compared to that used in the more traditional annual report. The consequence is that, although CSR reports arguably meet stakeholder demands for greater accountability and transparency and are accessible to a more general audience, they have been criticised as being simply another form of PR (Kellaway, 2000). The comparatively informal

style in which CSR reports are written is also reflected in the style of certain sections of Branham's proposals (see section 4.9).

A further related view suggests that CSR discourse is 'rhetoric' or corporate 'spin'. As Spence (2007) points out, because of the impossibility of organisations ever becoming 'corporate citizens', in itself a contradiction in terms, CSR discourse is replete with articulations that are essentially grounded in the business case and that promote yet another hegemonic corporate discourse. Even though CSR ideology is constructed and reproduced through discourse at many general levels of society, the inclusion of this discourse by the corporate world in their CSR reports may, according to Milne & Patten (2002) and Spence (2007), have rendered it meaningless.

#### **4.2.4 CSR: the regulation debate and its relationships to trust**

Although not a criticism of CSR, the debate about whether it should be formally regulated or not is an important one for this research. This debate is related to the potential for CSR to be defined as a trusted form of practice. Although the dominant view is that CSR should not be regulated (see Unerman & Dwyer, 2007) there are two sides to the debate which are reflected by two contrasting propositions:

- I. CSR can be trusted precisely because it is voluntary i.e. trust is embedded in the voluntariness.
- II. CSR cannot be trusted because it is voluntary and unregulated i.e. stakeholders do not implicitly trust CSR because for most aspects of business there are independent and effective regulatory practices which CSR still lacks.

Those that support the view that CSR should remain voluntary suggest that regulating it would stifle the potential for innovation and creativity that arises from the opportunity to garner wide stakeholder input into corporate practice. Moreover, if CSR remains self-regulating, organisations will be focussed on maximising both stakeholder and shareholder value and will, in the current competitive business climate, opt to adopt the best CSR policies and practices for these groups. Importantly, there is current support in many CSR circles for including 'voluntariness' as an additional measure of CSR performance (see AccountAbility, 2007; Zadek, 2006): that is, that a case is being made for corporations to be evaluated on the extent to which they 'voluntarily' subscribe to CSR initiatives. One wonders how, if implemented, this could be effectively measured.

There is also the view that if CSR were regulated it would favour the shareholder and economic aspirations of the organisation. The rationale for this argument is that because regulation is the ‘business case’, it inherently favours business over social and environmental issues. In line with this, is a further suggestion that, by remaining a voluntary practice, CSR reduces the regulatory burden on companies at a time when regulation is more often than not seen as ‘bad for business’ (Unerman & Dwyer, 2007).

In contrast, those who support regulation suggest that it makes corporations more mindful of CSR-related issues and thus produces better outcomes for all stakeholders. According to Owen *et al* (2001) CSR tends to marginalise the social and environmental rights of stakeholders in its quest to maximise shareholder value, so that regulating it would protect these rights. A noteworthy though theoretical paper in this debate comes from Unerman & Dwyer (2007) who argue for CSR regulation because:

regulations can serve to reduce actual and perceived risks inherent in many business activities, and perceptions of risk are important factors in determining the ongoing support and trust any business enjoys from a variety of its stakeholders, with the trust of a range of stakeholders being essential in delivering shareholder economic value.

(Unerman & Dwyer, 2007, p. 334)

Unerman and Dwyer support their argument by reference to Giddens' theory of ‘Reflexivity’ (1990;1994) and Beck’s theory of ‘Reflexive Modernity’ (1992; 1994) both of which focus on the interaction between regulation, risk and trust in society. Because their theories relate to an understanding of socially placed trust, I provide a brief overview of the relevant sections of each of these theories.

#### **4.2.5 Giddens and ‘Reflexivity’**

‘Reflexivity’ refers to the process of ‘becoming aware’ through newly appropriated knowledge and information. Giddens (1990; 1991; 1994) argues that in the current information rich world, our own experiences, as well as our reflexively appropriated knowledge of the experiences of others, is increasingly important in our assessment and understanding of many social phenomena and events. In particular, Giddens relates this to the way in which we place trust in ‘expert systems’. These systems can be broadly defined as those that rely for their effective operation on the specialist knowledge and know-how of particular individuals. These individuals are categorised as ‘experts’ in these expert systems in contrast to those who do not share this specialised knowledge and know-how and are, therefore, categorised in comparison as ‘non-experts’. According to Giddens, it is our ability to place implicit trust in the multitude

of expert systems with which we deal with every day that is a crucial aspect of how we live in the world (Unerman & Dwyer, 2007, p. 336). Indeed, Giddens argues that if this were not the case, society, as we know it, would collapse because it is reliant on non-expert support of these expert systems.

In tandem with this is Giddens' (1994) view of risk. He argues that people, who trust expert systems in this way, without having expert knowledge of them, are aware that the systems are not without risk. Thus we are aware of, or have a 'perception' of, risk. We, however, assume that this risk will be managed by the expert system and will remain within certain acceptable boundaries. If our reflexively acquired knowledge demonstrates otherwise, for example, if we become aware of the failure of a corporation to protect the environment in which we live, then we may begin to actively seek out information to inform ourselves about possible future risks of which we were previously unaware. In this context there is a tendency, according to Giddens (1994), to seek information about the potential for negative, rather than positive, future impacts. In seeking such information we are, therefore, likely to be exposed to 'alternative risk discourses'. If, as a result of this reflexively acquired knowledge, we perceive an organisation to be highly risky, we are likely to withdraw our trust from it. Giddens links this to corporate shareholder value. In the same vein, Unerman and Dwyer also comment that:

the withdrawal of trust by non-expert outsiders in one or two key expert systems compromises the effective operation of many aspects of society, including, the ability of many businesses to deliver maximum shareholder economic value.

(Unerman & Dwyer, 2007, p. 350).

If CSR were regulated then it would legitimise the categorisation of corporations as experts in this field and thus lessen the risk of stakeholders placing their trust in non-experts. It would also serve to lessen the risks inherent in the current unregulated form of CSR. Regulation would also raise the status of CSR by making it more visible as an expert system.

#### **4.2.6 Beck's theory of 'reflexive modernity'**

Beck's theory of reflexive modernity (1992; 1994; 1999; 2000) complements Giddens' reflexivity theory. In contrast to Giddens notion of 'awareness' of risk, Beck suggests that we live in a situation of 'unawareness' of the potential risks that face us. What we are, however, aware of is the fact that we lack knowledge, or as Beck suggests, 'aware of our unawareness'. We also assume that there will be unforeseeable and unintended consequences arising from our everyday interactions and actions and, as a result, we increasingly seek to raise our awareness

so as to be able to ensure acceptable outcomes, or levels of risk, in the future (see also Carter & Grieco, 2000). Beck suggests that in so doing we may choose to become part of, and place our trust in, the 'sub-political' world. This world consists of the social movements and counter-expert movements that promote alternative risk discourses the outcome of which can be anti-corporate action in the sub-political arena. Such movements are, as Beck (2000) notes, gaining increasing support as a result of globalisation and our knowledge rich world.

If CSR was independently regulated, this would lead to credibility for CSR and ensure that the unaware do not seek the knowledge of counter-experts who espouse these alternative anti-corporate discourses. Moreover, in summarising Giddens' and Beck's views, Unerman & Dwyer (2007) suggest that regulation of CSR would be a form of security against risk for business because regulation is, in itself, a trust measure. In other words, if something is regulated it is seen as more credible, less risky and therefore more worthy of trust.

#### **4.2.7 The current status of CSR**

Before leaving this discussion of CSR it is important to note that there is an alternative view to anti-CSR debates. Those who support CSR, of which Branham is one example, suggest that it opens up the possibility for genuine organisational change because it heralds the introduction of democratically motivated organisational processes through which society as a whole would be able to hold the corporate world to account (see also Gray, 2006; Levy, 1997; Livesey, 2001).

In counteracting the reluctance of some organisations to adopt a CSR approach, it is interesting to note that some of its main proponents such as GRI, AccountAbility and Zadek (2006) appear to be striving to brand it in more corporately palatable ways. This is evidenced in CSR discourse(s) which often suggest that economic, environmental and social perspectives need not be mutually exclusive but are able to operate together in mutually compatible and beneficial relationships. In light of this, an emerging discourse categorises the adoption of CSR by organisations as evidencing an organisation's 'responsible competitiveness'. This notion is defined by Zadek (2006) as organisations embedding social and environmental goals at the heart of competitiveness and taking decisions that uphold the values of social and environmental responsibility whilst simultaneously retaining their competitive edge in the marketplace. The cynic might say that this is just a form of PR for CSR. Others might judge this to be the means through which CSR can be aligned with the accepted and 'economically' focussed corporate paradigm rather than being an attempt to radically change it.

To conclude this discussion, I present a view which more directly links CSR with trust. Recent research by Parsons (2009) and Glazebrook (2004, 2005) proposes that CSR research has a major contribution to make to trust research because it crosses both social and organisational domains. As Glazebrook (2005) suggests, CSR provides the opportunity to research:

an entirely new contribution to knowledge about how trust, as manifested through prevailing social conditions, impacts directly on the overall functioning of the marketplace as an intrinsic yet largely hidden feature accompanying each and every transaction.

(Glazebrook, 2005, p. 65).

Whichever view of CSR one subscribes to, it is clear that it is replete with conflicting tensions. CSR remains in a state of flux and in search of universally supported practices and processes to define it and with which it can secure its place in the organisational domain. Branham is an organisation that sees its major role as providing input into how this might occur.

#### **4.3 Background to sustainability assurance**

Sustainability assurance, formerly referred to as social auditing, is the means through which an organisation measures and monitors its CSR performance. This change in nomenclature is not accidental and reflects the increasing need to legitimise this domain and brand it as trustworthy. It also indicates the attempt to more clearly differentiate the social approach to auditing from that taken in traditional financial auditing.

In spite of this change of name, what sustainability assurance means in practice remains somewhat vague. The Futures Foundation suggests that the practice is about:

measuring, reporting on and ultimately improving the behaviours of an organisation in relation to its own aims and in relation to the aims, interests, values and perspectives of its stakeholders  
(Social Auditing, 2008)

The roots of social auditing can be traced back to social activism in the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s (see Johnson, 2001). The term ‘social auditing’ was, however, not used in business circles until the 1990s when, as Swift and Pritchard (2000) note, it first appeared in the UK. Owen *et al* (2000) define the practice as an offshoot of financial auditing and report that social audits were formerly undertaken by professionally qualified financial auditors, often in tandem with financial audits, and so reflected traditional ‘accounting-based approaches’ to auditing (Boele & Kemp, 2005 p.110). This is potentially the reason for the initial inclusion of social auditing in corporate management systems being unsuccessful and characterised by CEO’s as ‘morally indigestible’ (Zadek, 2005). The increasing emergence of new audit philosophies,

including the notion of assurance, seems to have changed this opinion and rendered social auditing more acceptable.

The term 'assurance' appears to have first been used in 1997 by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) in the context of financial accounting. Unlike traditional auditing practices, which are generally based on quantitative 'tick the box' type activities and the collection of factual data, assurance takes a more qualitative approach. It encompasses a range of methodologies that range from ethnographic observations, attitudinal assessments, focus group discussions and other forms of stakeholder engagement. Assurance therefore combines, as MacLulich (2003) points out, traditional auditing practices with a more general business consulting approach. The aim of this broad approach is to collect a much wider breadth of information upon which future organisational decision-making and strategic planning can be based. The traditional collection of 'hard facts', such as numerical and statistical data, is complemented in this approach by the addition of 'soft facts' that are commonly, as MacLulich (2003) notes, opinion and impression-based. As a result, assurance assessments have come to be defined in non-financial terms and are referred to as 'value-adding audits', 'quality services,' or 'client focussed assessments' (MacLulich, 2003, p. 797). This new approach produces a customised product for the client but relies for its effectiveness on establishing longer-term auditor-client relationships. It is in the context of these relationships that trust comes into play.

In practice, the auditors of today are often embedded with a client and so are privy to a much wider range of corporately sensitive material than was formerly the case: especially when their role is to undertake a social audit. A number of scholars such as MacLulich (2003) Espejo (2001) Unerman & O'Dwyer (2007) and Larsson (2007) point out that practitioners can therefore no longer operate from an assumption of trust being present in their client relationships and so must learn to create it.

The practice of sustainability assurance reflects the new auditing world and, as Boele and Kemp (2005) note, employs one of three approaches:

- i. a traditional financial accounting-influenced auditing approach,
- ii. a social science based approach which relies on 'qualitative' methodologies such as survey-based research in order to measure stakeholder perceptions about key aspects of their relationship with the audited organisation,
- iii. a combination of the two, known as the 'hybrid' approach which incorporates aspects of traditional financial auditing with social science based thinking.

(Boele & Kemp, 2005 p. 111)

Zadek (2004) notes that the hybrid approach to sustainability assurance alleviates concerns that traditional financial auditing takes too narrow a view of 'risk' by interpreting it in terms of short-term financial risk rather than in line with the longer-term goals encompassed in the concept of sustainable development (see also Boele & Kemp, 2005).

Although all three forms of auditing remain in demand, the effect of this choice has been to attract auditors from a wider range of disciplines than has previously been the case with practitioners from the social sciences now represented in the mix. Sustainability practitioners have emerged as a specialised form of service provider and it is within this emerging practice that Branham sits.

In spite of the move to favour assurance over audit and the increasing interest in social assurance, the practice still suffers from what Boele & Kemp (2005) describe as the lack of 'professionalisation'. There is still no universally accepted accreditation process for sustainability professionals in Australia. Those working in the field tend to seek accreditation from other disciplines and find themselves competing with financially accredited auditors who are often seen as the 'professionals' by comparison (Boele & Kemp, 2005). This lack of recognition of sustainability assurance practitioners is exacerbated by the inherent tension in the hybrid approach with its attempts to combine social science and auditing methodologies. In spite of this, Branham employs a hybrid approach and is acutely aware of this tension defining sustainability auditors as 'occupying a contested space at the intersection of social science and traditional auditing—a space that seeks to meld two apparently contradictory approaches' (Boele & Kemp 2005, p. 116). It is against this background that Branham is attempting to build itself a sustainable client base.

#### **4.4 Background to the research site**

Branham was founded by its current Director in 2005. Starting with just 2 employees, by 2008 it had grown to 7. This was still too small to merit a formal governance structure so the outcome was that the Director remained responsible for making, or approving, all key business decisions. As a result of a 2008 employee survey of its staff, which highlighted the fact that it had outgrown its offices, Branham moved fifty metres up the road into a completely different space. It took on a former alternative therapies centre which is described in Branham's 2008 Sustainability Report (abbreviated to SR2008) as a space that 'somehow seemed appropriate for us'. This theme of being somehow different, or alternative, is one that appears in many different guises in Branham's construction of its own identity and is potentially a product of the unique services that it offers and the complexity of its organisational status.

Originally, the majority of Branhams' clients came from the mining and minerals sector both in Australia and overseas. As a result of increasing interest in CSR and sustainability, Branhams rapidly broadened its client base to include the banking sector, utility companies, IT development corporations and construction companies. Branhams is contracted by its clients to either give advice on the current state of their sustainability practices and/or assure their sustainability reports. To do so it employs the hybrid approach to auditing (see section 4.3) and so, in practice, promotes the collection and assurance of both quantitative and qualitative client data. To effectively collect this data requires Branhams to cultivate a number of complex client and client-stakeholder relationships. It is within the context of these complex relationships that trust is seen by the Director as an operational imperative for Branhams.

As a commercially run organisation, Branhams relies on its client base to survive. However, its focus is the provision of socially and ethically informed services. Like the clients it services, Branhams is consequently subject to the inherent tensions of CSR, the aims of which are to maintain a balance between the three pillars of sustainability: namely people, planet and profit. Additionally, the voluntary nature of CSR, as previously discussed, renders it a moral choice for organisations rather than a legally binding practice. Branhams consequently has to ensure effective 'marketing' of sustainability in order to itself remain financially viable but must in turn also be seen to be upholding the social and ethical values inherent to CSR. In terms of its organisational relationships, this means that Branhams not only has to establish its own legitimacy with its clients but also has to win the trust of its clients' stakeholders. To clarify, Branhams is contracted by clients to comment and offer advice on their sustainability performance and assure their sustainability reports. This is, in part, dependent on Branhams' ability to collect and 'independently' assess input from the clients' stakeholders on the client's sustainability performance. Branhams is, in this regard, reliant on the clients to provide Branhams' consultants with 'independent' access to these stakeholders. Stakeholders are most commonly the clients' employees or members of the local community in which the client company operates. This may include stakeholders of Australian Aboriginal descent for whom land rights, the preservation of cultural heritage, and social and human rights risks are to the fore in the consideration of an organisation's sustainability performance.

The trust issues associated with the circumstances of 'independent access' are inevitably complex and involve high-risk relationships for the client, the clients' stakeholders and the consultant. To explain further, the risk for the client is that their stakeholders may provide Branhams with negative feedback on their social and environmental performance. There is also risk for the client's stakeholders who must trust that if they speak honestly and openly to Branhams' consultants, there will be no retribution from the client organisation. For Branhams,

the risk is in ensuring that they report honestly and openly and assess both client and client stakeholder input 'independently'. To further exacerbate the complexity of these relationships, Branhams undertakes to provide all participants in its sustainability assurance processes (both client and client stakeholders) with feedback, even if this is negative. This constitutes a risk-taking action by Branhams but is one that is viewed by the Director as crucial to establishing trust, a point which is drawn out further in analysis of Branhams' business proposals.

Unsurprisingly, Branhams often finds itself walking a fine line in its relationships with its clients to ensure that the requirements and standards of sustainability performance reporting are met. As the Director explains 'sometimes the client doesn't get why you're running a process but you're not really running it with ME [the client] at the centre and your [Branhams] interests are prime '. This comment reflects the tensions in offering a service that is paid for by clients but which in practice, because of its reliance on client-stakeholder input, marginalises them. Branhams operates in this complex and contested socio-pragmatic space and it is from this standpoint that proposals to clients are drafted.

#### **4.4.1 Researcher relationship to research site**

My introduction to Branhams was an outcome of attending several industry presentations given by Branhams' Director to industry practitioners working in CSR. At each of these, the Director stressed the significance of trust to his organisation, defining himself and Branhams as 'being in the Trust Business' (see Extract 5.1). My request for Branhams to be involved in this research was a consequence of these presentations.

To initiate the study, I held two informal meetings with the Director. The nature of Branhams' work restricted my access to other personnel. Its consultants generally work away from Branhams' offices, are embedded with clients for extended periods of time, and are typically based in remote locations of Australia: often working with indigenous Australian communities. Additionally, as an organisation in the 'start-up phase', researcher access to Branhams' clients or client-stakeholders was not held conducive to the initiation of trusting client relationships. My relationship with Branhams was therefore characterised by sporadic meetings, phone calls and emails. Although I was able to talk to consultants informally on a number of occasions and had access to company documentation and Branhams' website, I was never fully embedded at this research site.

The choice to focus on proposals and related documentation arose as a consequence of this limited access but also from a view that, because the proposals had eventuated in work for

Branhams, they must have played a role in cementing the client-organisation relationship and so in initiating client-organisation trust. This view is elaborated upon in section 4.4.2.1.

#### **4.4.2 Overview of semiotic resources**

An overview of data used in this study was provided in Chapter 3, Table 3.2. This is expanded upon in the following section.

The primary data considered in this study is three proposals submitted by Branhams to prospective clients in the process of acquiring work. These are referred to by abbreviation and date; P2004, P2006 and P2007. This data is supported by field notes taken from my informal discussions with the Director and interactional data taken from a semi-structured audiotaped interview with the Director. This interview ran for just over an hour and did not rely on pre-set questions but rather sought to clarify the Director's understanding of trust, discuss what this meant in practice for Branhams, and encourage him to recount his experiences of trust and those practices which he considered to be trust enabling.

Secondary data was sourced from Branhams' website. This included access to Branhams' sustainability reports from 2006-2009 which are referred to in this study as SR2006, SR2007, SR2008 and SR2009. My assumption in referencing this secondary data was that, in the process of evaluating proposals for work, prospective clients might defer to a company website to access additional information or to verify their initial impressions of a proposal applicant. Supporting this data set were field notes from informal discussions with Branhams' consultants and from attendance at an industry forum to review the AA1000 standard employed for sustainability assurance. These standards are referred to throughout the analysis and discussion of findings in this case study and an overview of the most relevant is provided in Appendices 2 and 3.

The decision to focus on the initial stages of trust in the context of organisation-client relationships was a consequence of my initial informal discussions and the semi-structured interview with the Director (see opening excerpt and Extract 4.1). A first pass analysis of data supported this focus as did the situation of Branhams being a new organisation in a new field of practice. The proposal data also provided a relevant medium through which the initiation of organisation-client trust could be analysed.

Although I am aware that the sample of available proposals in this study is relatively small, the multi-perspectived discourse analytic approach, outlined in Chapter 3, allowed for findings to be considered from the social-institutional perspective, the participant perspective and in

relation to the secondary sources of data outlined above. This was sufficient to generate empirical evidence to support theories of how initial trust might be established (see Chapter 2, sections 2.5.1, 2.5.2 & 2.6).

#### **4.4.2.1 Proposals as a trust-initiating genre for Branhams**

The proposal is one of the main channels through which Branhams conveys an impression of trustworthiness to prospective clients. Other channels that are also likely to perform this function for Branhams are its website, word of mouth, advertising, meetings with prospective clients annual financial reports and sustainability reports. Some triangulation of proposal data with material from Branhams' website and its sustainability reports is included in this study although the primary data is the three proposals.

As previously noted (section 4.4.1), the proposals selected for this study were chosen not simply because of their availability but also because there was evidence that they had played a part in the initial stages of cementing associated organisation-client relationships, in that they had each eventuated in a contract of work for Branhams. Although it is acknowledged that many other forms of organisation-client contact must have also played a part in initiating the organisation-client relationships under scrutiny here, client input was not available to verify this.

In this study, the proposal is seen as pivotal to framing organisation-client relationships and assuring prospective clients that, even in the absence of knowledge of the sustainability industry, or of first-hand experience with Branhams, it is Branhams that can be trusted to fulfil the clients' needs. In awarding Branhams the contract for work, the client is acknowledging that they perceive Branhams to be a trustworthy service provider. The proposal can thus be defined as a vehicle for conveying this perception of trust. Critics might suggest that, in reality, proposals have little to do with trust and that contracts are awarded purely on the basis of price. Although for reasons of confidentiality I do not examine the financial aspects of Branhams' proposals in this study, I believe this view to be unfounded in this case. Supporting documentation and my own knowledge of Branhams depicts its 'brand' as ethically motivated and based on 'quality' and 'value adding' services. In support of this, it is worth noting the Director's following comment:

We are keenly aware that there are competitors on price but we believe our methodologies, and the level of resources we ask of clients is critical to ensuring the highest quality work. This is both in terms of sufficiently reducing risk for the client and for Branhams. We set our service

price at a level that we believe is necessary to ensure we can deliver high value advice to our clients in helping them become more sustainable and responsible organisations.

(Director's Response to Branham's 2005 Client Evaluation Survey)

A further point that adds credence to positioning proposals as vehicles for creating trust is the practice of sustainability assurance itself. As discussed throughout the sub-sections of 4.2, CSR remains highly controversial and also unregulated. In choosing to 'opt in' to having its sustainability performance assured, a company is taking risks and opening itself up to scrutiny from other than a financial orientation. This includes allowing sustainability auditors access to potentially sensitive corporate material as well as to internal and external stakeholders who may be highly critical of the organisation's social performance. Consequently, the willingness of an organisation to undertake assurance is akin to its taking 'a leap of faith' (see Lewis & Weigert, 1985 & Chapter 2, section 2.6.2). The choice of practitioners to undertake this potentially sensitive work is therefore most likely to be made on the basis that a trust-based client-service provider relationship will ensue.

#### **4.5 The ontology of trust addressed by this study**

In the introduction to this study (section 4.1), I noted that Branham's was striving to build client trust in three main areas: in sustainability assurance and its associated services, in Branham's as a newly established provider of these services, and in Branham's personnel. This broadly reflects a need to develop the kind of institution-based trust discussed by Luhmann (1979) McKnight *et al* (1998) Rousseau *et al* (1998) and Pennington *et al* (2003), organisational trust as defined by Noorderhaven (1992; 1995) and Mayer *et al* (1995) and interpersonal trust as addressed by, amongst others, Solomon & Flores (2001) and Lewicki *et al* (2006). Chapter two has provided an overview and explanation of each of these types of trust.

Although distinctions between these trust types remain fuzzy, categorising trust in this way provided me with a means of accounting for the differences in rhetorical features and choices that were evident from discursive analysis of the proposals. The decision was also an outcome of Branham's ontological perceptions of trust which are examined in the following sections (4.5.1 & 4.5.2).

### 4.5.1 Investigating trust and its role at Branhams

To reflect the research approach outlined in Table 3.1 (Chapter 3, section 3.4.1), the first ethnographic research phase of this study sought to understand how trust was conceptualised and practiced at Branhams and from this to decide how it might be most effectively researched. This included investigation of the Director's frequent description of Branhams as 'being in the Trust Business'.

The following Extract (4.1) is taken from the start of the semi-structured interview with the Director. A short excerpt from this Extract was discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.3) to illustrate the relationship between trust and institutionalised big 'D' Discourses as proposed by Gee (1990) and Gee *et al* (1996). This discussion is expanded here to focus specifically on what trust means at Branhams and to unpack the Director's definition of Branhams as 'being in the Trust Business'.

#### Extract 4.1

##### Director

1. Analyst: you've always talked about trust.
2. Director: Yes=
3. Analyst: =I mean It's kind of one of your buzz -words when I've heard you talk
4. Director: I know, I know, I seem to do a little less lately=
5. Analyst: =oh? that's interesting
6. Director: yeah I know but, but, I've always characterised us as being in the trust business (.) I think (.) probably because we're doing more consulting.
7. Analyst: /OK?/
8. Director: /and probably thinking/ more around assurance as being a (.) a true trust service, the er (.) you know, you're building credibility, you're building trust in the subject matter so (...) yeah no (...)
9. Analyst: but that's interesting if you're saying that you're not talking about it quite so much=
10. Director: =yeah it is isn't it? funny how things evolve. (...) but, but when I think about it the bulk of what we still do is (...) all roads probably lead back to stakeholder engagement and one of the primary outcomes of engaging stakeholders is building trust in relationships. I mean fundamentally a relationship, you know, works on a foundation of trust and if you haven't got that foundation you're not really going to have a very (.) productive relationship.

Previous discussion of Extract 4.1 in Chapter 3, noted its role as an example of reflective practice (Schön, 1983) and as evidencing cognitive processing through the prevalence of linguistic features such as the repeated phrase 'I think' and prosodic features such as hesitations. In analysing the extended version of this Extract, what becomes noticeable is the Director's change of tone. In turn 4, he provides immediate response and confirmation of the comment that trust is one of his 'buzz words' (turn 3) with his 'I know, I know' but notes that he currently seems to be talking less about trust. By turn 6 his tone has clearly become more circumspect. This is denoted in the repetition of 'but', the perceptible pauses, and the elongated vowel in 'al:ways'. This change in tone is further evidenced by the Director's suggestion that the characterisation of Branham as 'being in the trust business' is not as relevant now because Branham is 'doing more consulting work'.

By turn 10, the Director is seen to be ruminating on this apparent change to the trust focus at Branham. His lengthy pause following 'the bulk of what we still do is (...) ' and the use of modalised probability in 'all roads probably lead back to stakeholder engagement' suggests that he is struggling to find the link between Branham's current focus on assurance and stakeholder engagement. To explain this further, I should note that in the Director's presentations and in my informal discussions with the Director, his description of Branham as 'being in the Trust Business' was always linked to Branham's stakeholder engagement work.

Towards the end of turn 10, it is evident that the Director sees stakeholder engagement as more significant for building trust than Branham's assurance work. His claim that 'when I think about it the bulk of what we still do is (...) all roads probably lead back to stakeholder engagement' provides initial support for this proposition which is then reinforced by the Director's strong declarative statement that 'one of the primary outcomes of engaging stakeholders is building trust in relationships' (turn 10). The implication here is that it is through stakeholder engagement that a foundation of trust is built.

In contrast, the definition of assurance as a 'true trust service' presumes institutional trust by characterising assurance as intrinsically trustworthy. In other words, the Director is here implying that Assurance has an established institutional order and one that is directly aligned to trust. This occurs because in the act of assuring something one is, in effect, marking it as trustworthy. To take an example from its own area of practice, Branham, by assuring a company's CSR report, is providing formal recognition that a company has met certain recognised standards and is to be trusted with respect to its CSR performance. Thus trust is, in this case, conferred by, and the outcome of, a recognised institutionalised practice.

Of course, one might argue the value of such assurance, particularly in light of the voluntary and unregulated practices associated with CSR (see section 4.2.4). Nevertheless, claims that a company is to be trusted are generally warranted by the provision of different kinds of assurances. Discussion of how Branham discursively constructs such assurances in its proposals is provided in section 4.7.1.

The overall impression that one draws from Extract 4.1 is that the ontology of trust at Branham is complex and consists of both impersonal and personal forms of trust. Significantly, however, both forms are seen as ‘actionable’ (Candlin & Crichton, 2013, p. 6). In Extract 4.1, the implication is that Branham both ‘builds trust in the subject matter’ and builds relationships of trust with stakeholders through ‘engagement’.

#### **4.5.2 The relationship between impersonal and relational forms of trust**

Trust theorists are divided as to the relationship between impersonal and relational forms of trust. Some hold that the basis of relational trust in organisations is impersonal forms of trust such as system trust, institutional trust and organisational trust (see Chapter 2, section 2.4). Zucker (1986) Sitkin (1995) and Gulati (1995) all propose that the development of impersonal forms of trust alleviates the need to develop relational trust. In professions such as Accountancy and Engineering there is held to be little need for professional practitioners to establish interpersonal client relationships in order to effectively perform their professional duties (see Gulati, 1995). Other trust theorists, such as Shapiro (1987) and Lewis & Weigert (1985), claim that the development of impersonal forms of trust is the first step in developing trusting organisational relationships. The studies of trust mentioned in this paragraph are, however, still unclear as to what the precise relationship is between impersonal and relational forms of trust but they do provide this research with a clear basis for considering impersonal and relational forms of trust separately.

#### **4.6 Focus on the discursive initiation of institutional trust**

A variety of linguistic and pragmatic features evident in the proposals is associated with the development of institutional trust. Although these features also support the establishment of organisational trust and interpersonal trust, I consider that the examples discussed in the following subsections of 4.6 are more pertinent to initiating institutional trust as they demonstrate how ‘situational normality’ and/or ‘structural assurances’ (McKnight *et al*, 1998) are discursively constructed.

#### 4.6.1 Conceptualising and developing institutional trust

Based on Shapiro (1987) Zucker (1986) and McKnight *et al* (1998) institutional trust is defined in this study as a belief that the necessary structures are in place at Branhams to enable positive outcomes for its client from its endeavours. Evidence of this is provided to the client by what McKnight *et al* refer to as 'institutional cues' (McKnight *et al*, 1998). These cues represent either 'situational normality' (McKnight *et al*, 1998; Lewis & Weigert, 1985) or provide 'structural assurances' (McKnight *et al*, 1998) to the prospective client.

The concept of 'situational normality' was introduced in Chapter 3 (section 3.4.1) as synonymous with the 'institutional order' (Berger & Luckman, 1966). These concepts both reflect the view, also put forward by Di Luzio (2006) Luhmann (1979) and Pennington *et al* (2003), that institutional systems and professionals work in recognisably predictable ways and that it is this conformity that marks them as trustable. To investigate situational normality from a discourse analytic perspective is to seek evidence that an organisation behaves and interacts, or intends to behave and interact, in ways that conform to a recognised social and/or institutional order.

In organisational documentation such as proposals this may equate to complying with the linguistic and discursive expectations of the business discourse community as well as with conventions that are held to typify this genre. In proposals this may include structuring the proposal in a particular way such as using key phrases and writing in a suitable business register. Situational normality may also be conveyed by behaving and interacting in ways that are consistent with one's 'assigned' role in relation to the other party. As the business proposal provides for initial framing of the service provider-client relationship, it is, in part, responsible for activating the roles that parties will take in the relationship. Analysis of how this relationship is discursively shaped by the service provider through, for example, the use of inclusive pronouns such as 'us' and 'we' or through employment of a particular register will convey to the prospective client whether the relationship will conform, or not, to the organisational status quo. If discursive evidence of this type is provided at the start of organisational relationships then, according to McKnight *et al* (1998), 'the individual's belief that the situation is normal helps that person feel comfortable enough to rapidly form a trusting intention toward the other party in the situation' (McKnight *et al*, 1998, p. 478).

Structural assurances provide evidence that socially accepted and recognised standards, regulations, guarantees and routes to legal recourse are in place. If these are given salience in the initial stages of an organisational relationship, concerns that are typically generated by a

lack of firsthand knowledge, or experience with the other party will, as McKnight *et al* (1998) suggest, be alleviated.

Structural assurances initiate trust by implying that the relationship into which parties are entering is safeguarded; that is, they provide evidence to mitigate the risks that are intrinsic to new relationships. If a party is willing to provide safeguards for a new organisational relationship, then this is also likely to have ‘spin offs’ for the establishment of relational trust. This occurs because an organisation providing evidence of safeguards will be seen as more trustworthy than one which does not, and trustworthy institutions are held, in the absence of experience to the contrary, to be indicative of trustworthy personnel (McKnight *et al* 1998, p. 479).

#### **4.6.2 The proposal genre as an index of ‘situational normality’**

The business proposal is central to the institutionally recognised process of acquiring work. The need for proposals has arisen as a consequence of social and political criticism of monopolisation and anti-competitive behaviour. The established practice of soliciting proposals from a range of potential service providers prior to offering a contract for work is inherently competitive.

For the prospective service provider the primary purpose in submitting a proposal is to position his organisation as the 'best for the job' in comparison to the other applicants, who will generally remain unknown to each other. There is therefore an intrinsically promotional aspect to proposals and the genre ‘crosses the boundary’ between marketing and providing information to a client (Delin, 2005, p. 4). Within this mix is also the proposal’s role as the initiator of a new organisational relationship. Whether the client embarks on this relationship by offering the service provider work is dependent on the service provider’s ability to convince the client, through the proposal, that his organisation can be trusted to fulfil the client’s needs.

Business proposals are framed by both implicit and explicit conventions. As Lagerwerf and Bossers (2002) note, explicit conventions may be set out in the client’s request for a proposal. The proposal structure may also be pre-determined by the client through the provision of a proposal template. In other cases, decisions as to what to include and how to write the proposal are left to the service provider. The latter was the case in this study so that analysis of the proposals not only provides evidence of how Branham discursively positions itself as the organisation to be trusted but also shows the extent to which Branham has chosen, in writing

its proposals, to conform to ‘situational normality’ – seen here as the implicit expectations of the business discourse community.

According to Cooren (2010), there are three broad implicit client expectations of a business proposal. First, that the proposal will provide evidence of the service provider’s ability and suitability to undertake the work on offer. Second, that the proposal will detail how the service provider intends to undertake the work. Third, that the proposal will include a proposed budget. Some of these elements such as the budget may be pre-determined by the client. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of the service provider to provide evidence, through the proposal, of how they intend to meet the client’s needs in these three respects.

Although the paper by Freed & Broadhead (1987) is now somewhat out dated, it is worth noting their suggestion that a further implicit convention of the proposal is that it will conform to a predictable formulaic structure. Compliance with this expectation allows, according to Freed & Broadhead (1987), like to be compared with like and thus makes the competitive situation equitable. Additionally, if the prospective service provider conforms to genre conventions they are, as Freed and Broadhead (1987) note, facilitating the job of the decision makers who may be time poor and faced with a large number of proposals to read through. In the contemporary organisation this proposed conformity is now arguably passé and, in the process of submitting proposals, organisations are inevitably hoping to stand out from the crowd. Technology and new media has played a big role in allowing this to happen and today's business proposals are often large, glitzy, colourful, documents with graphics, pictures and many other forms of multi-modality in evidence. Surprising then, in my professional experience of drafting and writing such documents, that even when no proposal template is available, there still appears to be an institutionalised way of structuring the business proposal to which many organisations still intuitively conform. Admittedly, there is great variety in the way in which the content of a proposal can be presented but the implicit client expectations that Cooren (2010) is suggesting, appear to play a significant role in predicting how organisations structure their business proposals. This to some extent supports Freed and Broadhead’s (1987) view that there is an underlying structure to the business proposal even if it is no longer based on a standardised, or formulaic, proposal template.

A specific trust-related outcome of compliance to both explicit and implicit proposal genre conventions is that compliance may act as an ‘institutional cue’ (McKnight *et al*, 1998) and provide evidence of situational normality. To diverge from genre conventions in proposal structure or to include items that may be judged to constitute linguistic or pragmatic ‘unusualness’ (Delin, 2005), for example, the addition of unanticipated proposal sections, or the

use of uncommon word choices, is potentially risky and could result in distrust of the service provider.

While not analysing the proposals in detail at this point, Table 4.1 provides an overview of how Branhams' proposals are structured. This includes details of the proposal length, the proposal title and section headings listed in the order in which they appear. A cursory glance at the overall structure of the proposals confirms their similarity, marks them as having a common purpose and as belonging to the 'same' genre (see Swales, 1981). Each proposal includes what researchers such as Jablonski (1999) and Lagerwerf & Bossers (2002) have judged to be requisite proposal sections covering scope of work, methodology, details of personnel and budget.

The proposals also include what might be held to be several non-conforming sections such as 'Confidentiality' and 'Conflict of Interest', with P2006 and P2007 also including 'Complaints' as a section heading. Appendix D of P2007 consists of an 'Evaluation Report to Clients' which comprises a full copy of a 2005 Client Evaluation of Branhams' services. The inclusion of these sections, which are discussed in later sections of this study, demonstrates that Branhams has taken some risks in structuring its proposals. Interestingly, when Branhams takes these risks it is typically in conjunction with socially-oriented topics and through employment of a more personal register. These risk-taking features thus seem to be oriented to 'cueing' relational rather than transactional forms of trust.

**Table 4.1: Comparison of the structure of three of Branhams’ proposals**

Proposal 2004 (P2004)	Proposal 2006 (P2006)	Proposal 2007(P2007)
<p><b>Prospective client:</b> Bank</p> <p><b>Purpose as stated on front cover:</b> Proposal to review Partnerships in Cape York for XXX [a bank].</p> <p><b>Length:</b> 9 pages</p>	<p><b>Prospective client:</b> Mining Company</p> <p><b>Purpose as stated on front cover:</b> XXX Social Assessment Proposal.</p> <p><b>Length:</b> 16 pages</p>	<p><b>Prospective Client:</b> Accounting Association</p> <p><b>Purpose as stated on front cover:</b> Tender for the provision of consultancy services to evaluate how professional and business ethics are applied in practice by accounting firms.</p> <p><b>Length:</b> 29 pages</p>
Overview of proposal section headings		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal summary</li> <li>• Table of contents</li> <li>• Proposal summary</li> <li>• Background</li> <li>• Review Objectives</li> <li>• Review scope</li> <li>• Recommended Methodology</li> <li>• Review criteria</li> <li>• Deliverable</li> <li>• Proposed interviewees-options</li> <li>• Estimated budget options</li> <li>• The Assessor</li> <li>• Confidentiality</li> <li>• Conflict of interest</li> <li>• Biography of personnel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Assessment objectives</li> <li>• Recommended scope</li> <li>• Recommended Methodology</li> <li>• Scope of work aims and Branhams methodology</li> <li>• Methodological options</li> <li>• Timeframe</li> <li>• The Branhams Team</li> <li>• Assessment Budget</li> <li>• Deliverables</li> <li>• Privacy</li> <li>• Complaints</li> <li>• Confidentiality</li> <li>• Conflict of interest</li> <li>• The Branhams team</li> <li>• <u>Appendix:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Full costing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Table of contents</li> <li>• Assignment objective</li> <li>• AA1000 assurance standard</li> <li>• The Scope</li> <li>• Approach to providing services–stages 1,2,3</li> <li>• Pricing</li> <li>• Timeline</li> <li>• Branhams Experience that meets consultancy requirements</li> <li>• Skills and experience of personnel</li> <li>• Confidentiality</li> <li>• Complaints</li> <li>• Conflict of interest</li> <li>• RFP [request for proposal] Terms and Conditions–compliance table</li> <li>• <u>Appendices:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ _Appendix A: Detailed pricing</li> <li>○ Appendix B: Using NVivo in the Branhams Assurance Methodology (BAM)</li> <li>○ Appendix C: Methods for collecting Primary data for assurance &amp; evaluation assignments</li> <li>○ Appendix D: Evaluation Report to Clients</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### 4.6.3 The discursive construction of situational normality & structural assurances

Previous discussion has concluded that there is, as yet, no established institutional order for CSR. Clients receiving Branhams' proposals will generally have little understanding of what sustainability assurance means in practice. Additionally, as the Director comments, 'the relative immaturity of the service market means that for the prospective client there is [as] yet little real comparison of like for like services' (Director, P2007). As a pioneer in the field, Branhams is in a unique position to shape the institution of sustainability assurance and its accompanying discourse community and to do so, in part, by the way in which it structures its proposals.

The provision of what McKnight *et al* (1998) define as 'structural assurances' is a common feature of proposals which typically provide details of the standards and regulations to which a service provider intends to work. In many cases, the prospective client will already be familiar with these. However, this is not the case in this study. Even though Branhams provides details of its methodology and standards in its proposals these are not, as yet, well-enough known to be trusted by the client. Branhams' structural assurances therefore have to be discursively constructed in a way that will brand them as trustworthy.

With the exception of P2004, which is a proposal for part of a larger project that already has its methodology and standards in place, both P2006 and P2007 provide extensive and in-depth explanations of Branhams' methodologies and standards of practice. Two thirds of P2006 and one third of P2007 is dedicated to this. Although devoting such a high proportion of the proposal to these explanations, in itself, provides assurances to the client, there are more subtle lexical and grammatical features that also serve this purpose.

In P2006, which is a proposal for a social impact assessment, Branhams emphasises that:

#### **Extract 4.2** **P2006**

Interpretation and analysis is conducted using a range of recognised social assessment tools and this is supported by the use of NVivo, research software specifically designed for the type of qualitative research undertaken in social impact assessments

(P2006, p. 6)

Extract 4.2 notes that NVivo, the research software used by Branhams, has been 'specifically designed' for social impact assessments. The use of the focusing adverb 'specifically' defines NVivo as unique and explicitly suited for social assessment. Its use also emphasises to the potential client that Branhams has knowledge of the right tools for the job and thus positions

Branhams as offering specialized services and appropriate means of analysis. It is worth noting that specialisation may work against trust by positioning organisations as different and, therefore, as not conforming to situational normality. However, as previously noted, what makes for ‘situational normality’ in the industry to which Branhams is affiliated has not yet been clearly defined.

The enhancement of structural assurances is also provided in Extract 4.2 through the use of the term 'recognised', as in ‘recognised social assessment tools’. The significance of this term is that it conveys the message that Branhams' practices are ‘known’ and acknowledged. Although it is not made clear in this extract by whom these tools are recognised, the implication is that recognition is wide.

The term ‘recognised’ and derivatives such as ‘recognition’ recur in both P2006 and P2007: six times in P2007 and twice in P2006 (including its use in Extract 4.3). Its use reinforces the assurances being provided to potential clients in several different ways by:

- highlighting the international reach of Branhams’ methodology (see i, iii and iv)
- strengthening expertise (vii)
- noting that Branhams’ analysis is globally acknowledged by social researchers (vi)
- providing support for Branhams' evaluative criteria (ii).

### **Extract 4.3**

#### **P2007**

- i. The AA1000 is internationally **recognised**
- ii. We ensure there are **recognised** criteria against which the evaluation is conducted.
- iii. International **recognition** of our methodology.
- iv. The AA1000 Assurance Standard has quickly grown in international **recognition**
- v. Those businesses who are **recognised** sustainability leaders are having it [the AA1000] used to assure their reports and their organisational processes and systems.
- vi. Its [NVivo] use provides Branhams with a level of analysis sophistication that is **recognised** by social researchers throughout the world

#### **P2006**

- vii. XXX has **recognised** expertise
- viii. Interpretation and analysis is conducted using a range of **recognised** social assessment tools

With the exception of example vi in Extract 4.3, the term ‘recognised’ is not attributable so it is unclear who exactly is doing the recognising. The assurances provided to the client in these examples are thus generic and are all the more persuasive for remaining so.

Reference to specific standards used in sustainability assurance is also made in the proposals. Reynolds & Yuthas (2007) note how industry standards represent organisational quality and consistency. Branham draws on this understanding in its sustainability reports by quoting sustainability expert David Waistell of AccountAbility who comments that ‘In all professions and industries, standards help ensure quality and consistency in both product and practice’ (SR2008, p. 16). The relationship, mooted here by Waistell, between standards and consistency is tantamount to the view that standards build situational normality. In other words, the application of standards in practice confirms that an organisation operates in a typically predictable ‘standardised’ and ‘situationally normal’ way.

Several standards are referred to in the data set. As the AA1000 is the most widely used global standard for sustainability assurance and the most referenced standard in the proposals, I have chosen to focus on this. The following Extract 4.4 is taken from P2007. This reference to the standard is especially significant because it is incorporated in the proposal which is addressed to an Accounting Association whose practitioners also conduct sustainability assurance and who are potentially in competition with Branham. By way of differentiation, it is pointed out throughout P2007 that accounting-based practitioners rarely use Branham’s ‘hybrid approach’ (see section 4.3) in conducting their assurance assessments.

Extract 4.4 is placed at the start of the proposal under the heading ‘Introduction’ thereby emphasising the importance of its contents:

**Extract 4.4**  
**P2007 Introduction**

We are pleased to present Branham’s proposal to evaluate how professional and business ethics are applied in practice by accounting firms. We believe the scope of work detailed in this proposal is best delivered using the assurance standard specifically developed by the Institute for Social and Ethical Accountability (AccountAbility UK) for assuring systems and processes for managing sustainable and ethical performance. The A1000 Assurance Standard (AA1000AS) is internationally recognised and is used by Big Four firms such as KPMG to provide this type of evaluation for their clients and in using in this evaluation we ensure there are recognised criteria against which the evaluation is conducted.

(P2007, p. 2)

In Extract 4.3, the reference to ‘recognised criteria’ implies consistency and thus reflects situational normality. Additionally, the use of mental process verbs coupled with the first person plural ‘we’ in, ‘we are pleased’ and ‘we believe’, suggests that Branham is endeavoring

to be open and frank, a trait which has the potential to strengthen client perceptions of Branham's trustworthiness.

Extract 4.4 conveys the trust-based elements of structural assurances in several different ways. Reflecting previous discussion of Extract 4.2, the term 'specifically' is used again to describe the AA1000 'as specifically developed by the Institute for Social and Ethical Accountability (AccountAbility UK)'. The use of this same lexis reinforces the implied proposition that Branham's practices are unique and, in turn, also strengthens the structural assurance being provided here. The use of this term also serves to differentiate Branham from other practitioners and implies a distinction between Branham and the Accounting profession to whom this proposal is addressed. This differentiation is a recurrent theme in P2007 and is discussed further in section 4.8.4.

Professionalisation of the AA1000 is made through the reference to its development by the 'Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability'. Institutes typically represent highly qualified professionals and this reference consequently aligns AA1000 as a standard associated with 'expert' practice. Further, the reference to 'AccountAbility UK', even if one were unaware of this organisation, positions the standard as international. The inclusion of 'UK', by inference, shows that AccountAbility has other branches around the world. This internationalisation is reinforced by the subsequent description of the standard as 'internationally recognised' and by the comment that it 'has quickly grown in international recognition since its release in March 2003'. A further indirect reference to internationalisation is made in Branham's claim of 'international recognition of its methodology'. These references provide an effective means of broadening the scope of Branham's structural assurances by emphasising that the AA1000 is acknowledged around the world.

Extract 4.4 also points out that the AA1000 standard is used by 'Big Four Firms': a reference to the four largest and best known international accountancy firms and, as such, an appropriation of 'stocks of professional knowledge' (Peräkylä *et al*, 2005; Peräkylä & Vehviläinen, 2003). This reference to a specialist term, which would only be known to those familiar with the discourse of a particular profession or discourse community, constitutes the appropriation of 'insider knowledge'. Although this reference would be known in industry and business circles, and specifically in the domain of finance and accountancy, its use here is a direct appeal to the Accounting Association client to whom the proposal is addressed. It serves to place Branham in the same discourse community as the Accounting Association by demonstrating that they share professional expertise. Moreover, aligning Branham's expertise with that of organisations

that have reputational significance, or with Big Four Firms, is a strong indication to the Accounting Association client that Branhams' practices are trustworthy.

The further value of Extract 4.4 for initiating trust is that it relies on inter-discursive relations. Branhams provides assurances to the prospective client through appropriation of language and knowledge from an institutionally recognisable big 'D' Discourse (Gee, 1990; Gee *et al*, 1996). Specifically, it borrows from a field of practice known and presumably trusted by the prospective client, namely, Accountancy. This demonstrates that Branhams trusts this particular discourse community enough to appropriate its discourse and to use it to mediate trust in its own area of practice.

#### **4.6.4 The discursive construction of 'guarantees': risk mitigation**

Besides the provision of institutionally recognisable assurances, Branhams also offers clients more interpersonally oriented guarantees in the proposals. These are consistent with socially rather than institutionally recognised values and belief systems and rely on an understanding of ethical rather than regulatory behaviour. This is consistent with Branhams' industry which, as previously discussed, is ethically rather than legally driven. These ethically motivated guarantees are included under the headings of 'Complaints', 'Confidentiality' and 'Conflict of Interest'.

The language used in these sections is almost identical across the three proposals. The example provided in Extract 4.5 is taken from P2006. Identifying features have been blocked out to preserve anonymity.

#### **Extract 4.5**

##### **P2006**

#### **Complaints**

Complaints in relation to the conduct of the Assessment Team members can be made to Branhams Principal XXXXX whose approach in dealing with complaints is governed by International Register of Certified Auditors' (IRCA) Code of Conduct. Complaints can be escalated to IRCA the certifying body which has a formal enquiry procedure – [www.irca.org](http://www.irca.org)

#### **Confidentiality**

All information exchanged during the course of an assignment is treated in the strictest confidence and will not be used or disclosed without proper or specific authority. All members of the team are prepared to sign additional confidentiality statements as long as they do not prevent the team from discharging their professional responsibilities.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

Branhams asserts that the Assessment Team members are free from conflicts of interest in providing these social assessment services to XXXX.

Under the headings ‘Complaints,’ Branhams outlines its proposed complaints handling procedure. This provides the client with the means of recourse to an externally validated complaints system. The complaints section is thus written from the perspective of client rights. The complaints system is validated by the Code of Conduct of an ‘independent body’– the IRCA. The use of the modal verb of possibility ‘can’ in the Complaints section rather than the declarative ‘will’ implies that the Complaints procedure will not need to be invoked. Branhams through this means is therefore conveying the message that it does not intend to court complaints in carrying out its duties for the client.

The ‘Confidentiality’ section offers further guarantees to the client. In contrast to the Complaints section, the means of risk mitigation here is based on an understanding of commercially accepted norms of behaviour and is not associated with recourse to an external body. Branhams notes that its consultants are prepared to ‘sign additional confidentiality statements’. This is, however, under the proviso that doing so does ‘not prevent the team from discharging their professional responsibilities’. The provision of this guarantee serves two trust-strengthening functions. Reflecting the Complaints section, the Confidentiality section also offers the client an extra safeguard if it employs Branhams. Secondly, the proviso strengthens the guarantee by inferring that Branhams’ intention is to operate professionally.

The ‘Conflict of Interest’ section is characterised by a strong declarative statement using the performative verb ‘asserts’, ‘Branhams asserts that the Assessment Team members are free from conflicts of interest’. In P2004 and P2007 this statement is softened through the use of ‘believe’ with P2007 stating that ‘Branhams does not believe it or members of the team have conflicts of interest’. As a verb of private mental process, the use of ‘believe’ invokes openness and sincerity. It provides the client with evidence that Branhams has thought through this declaration and chosen not to make a claim that it cannot warrant.

Modality plays a significant role in framing trust in all three of these risk mitigating sections. Modality provides speakers with the opportunity to express different shades of meaning between making declarative yes and no statements (see Halliday, 1985, p. 335) and allows for different levels of certainty, probability, or possibility to be expressed. It provides Branhams with the choice to either make a categorical statement or to express less than total commitment. In speech act theory when a strong declarative and ‘performative’ statement’ is used such as the ‘asserts’ in the ‘Conflict of Interest’ section (see Austin, [1962], 2005), it represents an indirect speech act (Searle, [1975] 1991) and has the illocutionary force of committing the speaker, here Branhams, to a particular action. In this case, the force of the ‘asserts’ is to dispel any possible

doubt that the client may have and assure him that there will be no conflict of interest if he offers Branhams the contract.

Alternatively, the use of modality to express probability and possibility rather than certainty makes a less than firm commitment. The Complaints section is characterised by the use of the modal verb ‘can’ which expresses possibility. The client is thus provided with the ability and opportunity to make complaints in a situation of possibility rather than certainty. This potential is expressed through the phrases ‘can be made’ and ‘can be escalated’. In this case, the choice of modality that expresses possibility serves to strengthen trust by suggesting that Branhams' intention is not to operate in a way that would merit the need for the complaints procedure to be activated.

The ‘Confidentiality’ section employs modal certainty through the use of ‘is’ and ‘will’. Although employing negative modality in ‘will not be used or disclosed without proper or specific authority’, no doubt or uncertainty is expressed in this statement and so it has the illocutionary force of Branhams making a firm promise to the client. Despite the lack of provision of information as to what constitutes ‘proper or specific authority’ here, the employment of modality of certainty marks ‘Confidentiality’ as of crucial significance to Branhams.

The overall significance of these three sections to trust is that they support Branhams’ description of itself as being in the ‘Trust Business’; that is, they demonstrate that Branhams has considered the risks inherent to the services that it provides and, as a consequence, it is prepared to offer guarantees that these will be minimised.

#### **4.7 Focus on the discursive initiation of organisational trust**

Organisational trust has mainly been associated with inter-firm relationships. Zaheer *et al* (1998) define it as ‘the extent to which organisational members have a collectively held trust orientation toward the partner firm’ (1998, p. 143). The term ‘organisational trust’ thus typically defines a collective rather than an individual trust orientation. Jeffries & Reed (2000) note that ‘obviously collectivity eliminates emotional attachment (i.e. organisations are incapable of emotion) so organizational trust remains purely cognitive in nature’ (2000, p. 875).

Cognitive trust is associated with evaluating either an organisation’s ability to ‘do the job’ (for more on this see Mayer *et al*, 1995; Delin, 2013; McKnight *et al*, 1998) or, as Ennew & Sekhon (2006) contend, the extent to which it can be relied upon to do what it says it will do, or both. Decisions about whether to enter into an inter-organisational relationship are therefore made on

the basis of evidence of an organisation's ability and reliability. This kind of evidence is more readily available to clients who have had prior experience with an organisation or the industry through which its services are offered.

As previously noted, the proposals in this study are framed by a lack of client knowledge of, and experience with, Branhams. Initiation of organisational trust is therefore dependent on Branhams ability to effectively write its ability and reliability into the proposals. The focus of analysis of organisational trust is therefore concerned with how Branhams' ability is discursively expressed and how it provides evidence to the client that it does what it says it is going to do.

An increasingly strong connection is being drawn in trust literature between organisational and interpersonal trust. Scholars such as McAllister (1995) and Lewis & Weigert (1985) propose that, in workplace settings, trust is likely to have both cognitive and affective dimensions which mean that the establishment of organisational trust is indistinguishable from the establishment of interpersonal trust. This occurs because both inter-organisational and interpersonal relationships involve attachment which is intrinsically associated with a certain level of care and concern. Moreover, in both inter-organisational and interpersonal relationships there is a belief in the intrinsic value of the relationship and its ability to provide mutually beneficial outcomes.

Zucker (1986) suggests that the boundaries between organisational and interpersonal trust remain especially blurred in smaller organisations like Branhams where the personality of the owner or managing director shapes the organisational culture in a way that results in staff who relate to their clients and other stakeholders in particularly trusting ways. Thus examination of the factors that initiate organisational trust is also likely to provide insight into the factors that enable interpersonal trust.

#### **4.7.1 Discursively expressing Branhams' competence**

Being part of a competitive process, service providers will inevitably strive to highlight their skills in proposals in ways that differentiate them from the other organisations also bidding for work. It is common for proposals to start with an explicit statement of the service provider organisation. This not only defines the organisation's strengths but also provides either explicitly, or implicitly, the evaluative criteria against which the organisation wishes to be judged by the prospective client. In P2006 Branhams' introductory statement is specifically geared to the proposed social assessment:

#### **Extract 4.6**

##### **P2006 Introduction**

Branhams has a track record of specialising in the social aspects of sustainability and working with companies and projects committed to understanding and addressing their social impacts, issues and opportunities.

The generic claim being made in Extract 4.6 is that Branhams has a ‘track record’. This claim is warranted later in the introduction by reference to ‘over 45 community and external relations assessments’ that Branhams has undertaken. The claim is accompanied by a list of reputable companies in which these assessments have been conducted.

In P2007 the introductory statement is more generic and almost a verbatim copy of that found on the homepage of Branhams’ website:

#### **Extract 4.7**

##### **P2007 Introduction**

Branhams is an Australian firm providing specialised services in sustainability assurance and advice. Our particular sustainability expertise is with the social and ethical dimensions. We pride ourselves on our critical, constructive and long-term approach to working with clients (see Appendix D for more on what our clients think of us).

The statement noticeably employs elaboration with Branhams not merely offering services but ‘specialised services’ and not just expertise but ‘particular expertise’. A more personal tone is also evident in Extract 4.7 in the use of ‘our’ ‘we’ and ‘ourselves’ as well as in the use of the emotive verb ‘pride’. These linguistic features convey the impression of an organisation that works collaboratively and whose consultants take care to develop close working client relationships or a ‘critical, constructive long-term approach to working with clients’. Branhams also points the client to Appendix D by way of warranting these claims.

Claims of experience or competence such as those included in Extracts 4.6 and 4.7, are only likely to be effective in initiating client trust if they are supported, according to McKnight *et al* (1998) with specific and sufficient detail. Branhams provides this in several ways, for example, by referring to its previous work contracts, providing details of staff qualifications, or emphasising its areas of expertise or uniqueness. Analysis shows that a recurrent linguistic pattern is used throughout the proposals to justify Branhams’ ability claims. This pattern has three connecting steps which I have defined as making a claim, providing a warrant for the claim and elaborating on the warrant. Notably, the elaboration step serves as a climax to the claim by emphasising something that is unique about Branhams. Some examples of this pattern

are provided in Table 4.2. The lexico-grammatical collocations that define the competence claim are bolded for ease of reference.

To further strengthen Branhams' competence claims, the proposals also include the personal names and contact details of past and continuing clients thus providing the proposal addressee with a list of potential referees for Branhams. The outcome is that, even though there is an inherently promotional element to these claims, many of them could be directly followed up by the prospective clients if they were so inclined. The provisions of these past client details therefore functions as a type of structural assurance (see section 4.7.1) by providing the client with an alternative means of checking Branhams' competence claims. They also provide evidence that Branhams has already been trusted by a range of other clients.

**Table 4.2 Claims and warrants of competence and expertise**

<b>Claim</b>	<b>Warrant</b>	<b>Elaboration</b>
Branhams has <b>significant experience</b> of evaluating the practical application of ethical and sustainability commitments and standards.	International recognition of our methodology.	most recently participating in a to-be-published debate on the role of materiality in sustainability assurance with XXXX London and KPMG.
	The Director's certification as a Lead Certified sustainability assurance Practitioner.	IRCA No. 1188527 – the first in Australia;
	Three organisational assurance assignments of XXXX that have specifically tested the systems and processes used by XXXX to manage its responsibility and ethical performance.	and provided us with a sound understanding of the ethical environment within which firms operate.
	Thirteen report assurance assignments for a range of clients including XXXX, XXXX, XXXX etc.	which have also provided us with an understanding of the ethical environment within which firms operate.
Our independence of the accountancy profession and the key players is <b>a significant strength</b> .	in terms of providing a fresh outside approach to evaluating this critical aspect of the accountancy profession's credibility.	Our independence in relation to the profession adds significant credibility to both the evaluation and report for this consultancy.
Branhams has <b>a track record of specialising</b> in the social aspects of sustainability and working with companies and projects committed to understanding and addressing their social impacts, issues and opportunities.	The Team's main strengths, arising from our practical work with clients, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ XXXX extensive involvement in social impact assessments in the mining sector.</li> <li>▪ XXXX recognised expertise in both using and teaching leading social impact assessment methodologies.</li> <li>▪ Over 45 community and external relations assessments for XXXX, XXXX and XXXX.</li> </ul>	We have assembled a team that ensures XXXX benefits from Branhams' extensive experience of the social dimensions of mining, the very latest thinking in social assessment methodology as well as local knowledge of mining's impacts on non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities.

#### **4.7.2 Providing evidence that Branhams delivers on its promises: ‘walking the talk’**

Organisational trust is also an outcome of demonstrated reliability and trustworthy behaviour. Without firsthand experience with the other party this facet of organisational trust is difficult for a prospective client to gauge. Trustworthy behaviour may be implied, or explicitly written, into the proposals but written documentation is typically only able to report on, rather than actively demonstrate, an organisation’s behavioural reliability.

Of specific relevance to actively demonstrating behavioural reliability in this study is the recurring use of the idiomatic phrase ‘walking the talk’. The phrase is conspicuous in the proposals because it is framed by quotation marks. For example, in the introduction to the 2005 Client Evaluation of Branhams’ services, in Appendix D in P2007, it states ‘In our commitment to ‘walk the talk’ Branhams conducted its first formal engagement with clients in 2005’. The significance attributed to the phrase by the quotation marks led me to examine its use throughout the complete data set.

A search of Branhams’ website revealed six further incidences of the phrase including a further four in Branhams’ sustainability reports and one in Branhams’ values statement. Its placement in this latter position categorises the phrase as a value for Branhams and thereby increases its significance. The phrase is a play on the more commonly used idioms of ‘talking the talk’ and ‘walking the walk’. Both are recognised organisational catch phrases and are invoked from ‘professional stocks of interactional knowledge’ (Peräkylä & Vehviläinen, 2003) that are commonly associated with professional development and training. Branhams’ Director explained his deliberate adaptation of the phrase to ‘walking the talk’ as an attempt to reflect an emphasis on action rather than simply interaction and to imply that Branhams seeks to ‘lead by example’.

The following extracts 4.8 and 4.9 illustrate how this catch phrase is used in the data and discusses its relationship to initiating trust:

##### **Extract 4.8**

We produced our first report in 2006, seeing it as a way to demonstrate our belief in the advice we provide to our clients and recognition that we should ‘walk the talk’.

(SR 2008, p. 2 Director’s report)

The use of the catch phrase in Extract 4.8 is taken from SR2008. Its use here is similar to that in P2007. Both usages suggest the significance of the practice of producing documentation, with Extract 4.8 implying that there are two somewhat different facets to such an action. First, is the act of generating a tangible product: by producing its own SR2008 report, which the client has access to via Branhams' website, Branhams is conducting the same practices on itself as it does on its clients. The second outcome is more intangible and implies that the production of the SR2008 report is a way of demonstrating Branhams' self-belief, or confidence, in its own advice. In reality, Branhams could have easily contracted an independent consultant to oversee and produce its sustainability reports but it has chosen not to do so. The SR2008 report is thus a demonstration that Branhams trusts its own ability to produce this report and thereby signals to prospective clients that they can too. As noted in Branhams SR2009:

#### **Extract 4.9**

The broader value of this reporting process is evidenced by seeing Branhams 'walk the talk' as we apply the same standards and processes we expect from our clients.  
(About this report SR 2009, p. 2)

Similar to Extract 4.8, Extract 4.9 suggests that the value of Branhams' reporting is that it is an active demonstration of practice rather than espousal of practice. In slight contrast to Extract 4.8, the action in 4.9 focusses on applying the same sustainability standards and processes to Branhams that are implemented with a client. Thus the focus in Extract 4.9 is not on the practice of producing a sustainability report per se, but rather doing so against the same standards and processes which govern the production of a client's report.

Returning to the inclusion of this catch phrase in P2007, its use here also foregrounds a practice, that is being adopted by Branhams and that is also implemented with its clients, namely, an evaluation survey. In effect, the sustainability assurance process which Branhams undertakes with client stakeholders is equivalent to the 2005 Client Evaluation of Branhams' services which is included in Appendix D, P2007. Although as previously indicated, the inclusion of this complete survey in the proposal breaks with proposal genre conventions (see Lagerwerf & Bossers, 2002; Freed & Broadhead, 1987) it provides an example of practice and tangible confirmation that Branhams does what it says it is going to do. The client evaluation survey is, therefore, in this case, an example of trust-initiating behaviour. Other features of this evaluation survey also play a role in initiating client trust and are discussed in the following section (4.8).

#### **4.8 Focus on the discursive-initiation of interpersonal trust**

One of the ways of initiating interpersonal relationships is through the ‘common ground technique’ (Cheney, 1983, p. 148). This works on the assumption, as Lee (2001) notes, that a speaker and listener, or a writer and reader, share a relationship based on similar values and beliefs. This assumption might be demonstrated by parties showing care and concern for each other in the earlier stages of a relationship, mirroring closeness, or by demonstrating that they share an affective bond (see also Mitchell, 1995; Greenspan *et al*, 2000).

In written texts the common ground technique can be evoked in a number of ways. The text might be structured to suggest that writer and reader already know each other through ‘informalization’ (Goodman, 1996) and the use of everyday language or the employment of a conversational tone (Fairclough, 1994; 2010). There may be evidence of genre mixing, for example, by appropriating a traditional spoken genre into a written text: such as occurs when snippets of conversations or stakeholder quotations are included in business reports (see Yeung, 2007). Writers might share personal details of their lives with readers, or alternatively categorise readers as being in the same ‘social’ group as themselves through the use of pronouns such as inclusive ‘we’ or ‘us’. Fairclough (2010) suggests that the tendency for institutions to appropriate conversational features of the type discussed above ‘could be called the “conversationalisation” of institutional discourse’ (2010, p. 135). He further suggests that this mixing of discourses can be identified ‘as a discursive part of social and cultural changes associated at some levels at least with increased openness and democracy, in relations between professionals and clients’ (Fairclough, 2010, p. 136).

A major challenge in the business domain is the increasing use of ‘conversationalisation’ for promotional purposes (see Delin, 2005; Levin & Beherns, 2003). The overuse of conversational discourse by organisations has, according to Delin (2005), the potential to create cynicism about its use and render it an untrustworthy form of organisational communication. Delin (2005) notes that in the context of regulatory statements, conversationalisation ‘can come across as inauthentic and false’ (2005, p. 30). In spite of these misgivings, conversationalisation is a conspicuous feature of Branham’s proposals.

Conversationalisation is most apparent in the letter inclusions in the three proposals. The introductions of P2006 and P2007 are the equivalent of proposal cover letters. P2007 also includes the ‘Director’s Response on Behalf of Branham’s’ to the client evaluation survey which is written in the form of a personal letter to clients who completed the survey. These ‘letters’ are

all similarly structured and exhibit similar discursive features. A broad overview of these similarities is presented in Table 4.3.

The inclusion of letters within the proposals is evidence of risk-taking by Branhams as such letters would typically 'stand-alone'. Cover letters, for example, are commonly submitted with proposals but as separate documents. The letters therefore break with proposal genre conventions and so with situational normality. By including these letters in its proposals, Branhams is strategically attempting to engender clients' trust. The effect of this could either promote, or damage, trust depending on how this unconventional proposal style is evaluated by the proposal readers.

The overall tone of the letters differs from the remainder of the proposal and is more personal. There is a higher incidence of pronominal use, e.g. inclusive 'we' and 'us' through which Branhams conveys a sense that it is a team-based organisation. For example:

**Extract 4.10**

We have assembled a team... (P2006)

We believe our independence of the accountancy profession...

Our independence in relation to the profession... (P2007).

In other sections of the proposals, the client-supplier relationship is constructed in the text. In P2006, where the methodological steps are outlined, it is made clear that Branhams expects to work collaboratively and on equal terms with the client:

**Extract 4.11**

XXXX and Branhams then agree on a mechanism for feeding back to all stakeholders who have participated.

(P2006, p.7).

**Table 4.3 Comparison of proposal ‘letters’ and Director’s letter of response to client evaluation in P2007 (Appendix D)**

<b>Letter section</b>	<b>P2006: Introduction</b>	<b>P2007: Introduction</b>	<b>P2007: Appendix D</b>
<b>Statement of purpose</b>	We are pleased to provide you with Branham's proposal to conduct a social assessment for XXXX.	We are pleased to present Branham's proposal to evaluate how professional and business ethics are applied in practice by accounting firms.	Director's Response on behalf of Branham's.  I was pleased to find that overall Branham's service is highly regarded by our clients.
<b>Preview of contents</b>	This proposal outlines our proposed methodology that meets the scope of work objectives. The proposal demonstrates that the methodology reflects current leading practice as well as providing a schedule of work.	This proposal details our approach, skills and experience of personnel, Branham's understanding, knowledge and skills and pricing.	I acknowledge the need for additional resources allowing me greater schedule flexibility giving clients more face-to-face consulting time.
<b>Assessment of key strengths</b>	We have assembled a team that ensures XXX benefits from Branham's extensive experience of the social dimensions of mining, the very latest thinking in social assessment methodology....	Our particular expertise is with the social and ethical dimensions. We pride ourselves on our critical, constructive and long-term approach.	While I agree with the need to expand, it is important that Branham's does not dilute its strengths. The ideal growth strategy ensures we remain congruent with what we are valued for.
<b>Details of key strengths/plans for improvements</b>	The Team's main strengths, arising from our practical work with clients, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>XXXX extensive involvement in social impact assessments in the mining sector;</li> <li>XXXX recognised expertise in both using and teaching leading social impact assessment methodologies.</li> </ul>	Branham's has significant experience of evaluating the practical application of ethical and sustainability commitments and standards using the AA1000AS, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International recognition of our methodology....</li> <li>A significant body of review and evaluation-based consultancy ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment 1: Grow the business with at least one additional Branham's staff member employed by the end of 2006.</li> <li>Commitment 2: Branham's will have a particular commitment to training, learning and development.</li> </ul>

<b>Conclusion</b>	Branhams is known for our commitment to critically and constructively challenge our clients through our assignments. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any enquiries regarding this proposal or require any further information.	We believe our independence of the accountancy profession and the key players is a significant strength in terms of providing a fresh outside approach to evaluating this critical aspect of the accountancy's profession credibility. Our independence in relation to the profession adds significant credibility to both the evaluation and report for this consultancy. Please contact the Director if you have any enquiries regarding this proposal.	And finally, many thanks for your support in 2005. I look forward to working with you again in 2006. Please, feedback on this report and the process is very welcome and as most of you know it is often difficult to get!
<b>Sign off</b>	Director's electronic signature and contact details provided		

In P2007 the approach to deciding which of the clients' external stakeholders might be interviewed during the data collection stage is described as 'a combination of client negotiated and opportunistic' (P2007, p. 19). This construction of a collaborative client-service provider relationship is in stark contrast to other aspects of the relationship over which it is clear that Branhams intends to maintain control. In addressing the need to collect data from the client's stakeholders in P2007 which I, as discussed in section 4.7, a highly sensitive practice, Branhams uncompromisingly notes that:

#### **Extract 4.12**

Branhams recognises that there will always be power dynamics that underpin any interview situation. Hence representatives of the client organisation are not to be present during stakeholder interviews.

(P2007, p19).

Extract 4.12 employs a more authoritative tone referring to 'Branhams' rather than 'we' and to the 'client organisation' rather than 'you'. Sentences are declarative and unmodalised and unequivocally state that clients 'are not to be present' in this context. The overall effect is to create greater distance between the client and Branhams and to place the relationship, in this situation, on a professional rather than an interpersonal footing. The construction of this more distant client-service provider relationship is atypical in the overall context of the proposals.

The letters also characterise the client-supplier relationship as dialogic. P2006 and P007 conclude with an invitation to the client to directly contact the Director. P2006 is a slightly more personalised invitation to dialogue than P2007 'Please do not hesitate to contact me' with P2007 suggesting that the reader 'Please contact the Director'. In spite of the difference in tone, the two phrases are significant in terms of trust in that they both encourage direct communication with the Director.

The letter in P2007 Appendix D extends this dialogic orientation by reflecting on the form that this might take. Although this letter is not addressed directly to the prospective client but rather to Branhams' existing clients, it provides insights into how the client-service provider relationship is viewed by Branhams. For example, in the conclusion to the letter in Extract 4.13 the Director invites further client feedback:

#### **Extract 4.13.**

And finally, many thanks for your support in 2005. I look forward to working with you again in 2006. Please, feedback on this report and the process is very welcome and as most of you know it is often difficult to get!

(P2007, p. 28).

The invitation to dialogue in Extract 4.13 is linguistically constructed in such a way as to portray closeness between Branhams and its clients. The use of the word ‘thanks’ rather than the more formal thank you and the direct reference to the client in ‘your support’ and ‘I look forward to working with you’ strongly implies relationships in which trust has already been established. This is supported in the final, very informal and rather humourously worded invitation, ‘Please, feedback on this report and the process is very welcome and as most of you know it is often difficult to get!’ Here there is noticeable use of the intensifier ‘very’ in ‘very welcome’. In the final line, the Director groups Branhams and its clients together suggesting that they share the same experience with regard to the difficulties inherent to the collection of feedback ‘as most of you know it [feedback] is often difficult to get!’ The use of the exclamation mark may either infer that Branhams faced some challenges when collecting feedback for its clients or it might be a ‘dig’ at the clients themselves for the way in which they responded to the client evaluation survey. What is significant, in terms of trust, is that Branhams’ Director feels comfortable enough to include the exclamation mark. This is a marked evocation of a conversational feature of the language which suggests a closeness and familiarity between the Director and those clients who have completed the evaluation survey. This tone provides indirect evidence to the prospective client that Branhams already enjoys trusting relationships with its clients.

The mirroring of dialogue between Branhams and its existing clients is further evidenced in the copy of the client evaluation survey itself. The first page of this evaluation is comprised of attributed client quotations (see Extract 4.14) which are directed either at Branhams or the Director.

#### **Extract 4.14**

- i. After five years Branhams is still my most valued consultant and advisor.
- ii. XXXX has greatly benefited from the enlightenment, advice and encouragement provided by Branhams Sustainability and Social Insurance.
- iii. Branhams’ Director provided an excellent level of service throughout the report assurance (P2007:2).
- iv. The Director’s knowledge and expertise in the field of social sustainability is unmatched in Australia.

The quotations in Extract 4.14 act as a form of ‘open’ reference and are inherently promotional in that they all provide extremely positive evaluation of Branhams’, or the Director’s, services. Branhams is described as ‘my most valued consultant’ (i), XXXX claims that it has ‘greatly benefited’ (ii), while the Director is also held to have provided ‘an excellent level of service’ (iii) with his expertise being ‘unmatched in Australia’ (iv). The quotations also mirror one of Branhams’ principal sustainability assurance practices: the collection of client and client-stakeholder input and provision of feedback. These quotations are inter-discursive and represent client speech in written form. Considered together with Branhams’ inclusion of the full client evaluation survey, the presence of these quotations emulates the kind of feedback loop that Branhams seeks to implement between itself and its clients, and between its clients and their stakeholders. The significance of these discursive features is to provide the prospective client with a further example of enacted practice and to reinforce the claim that Branhams ‘walks the talk’.

In spite of these more potentially interpersonal trust-initiating strategies, the proposals do not privilege the building of interpersonal trust. None of the quotations in Extract 4.14, nor the remainder of the proposals’ text, refer to consultants other than the Director. The only insight that is given into Branhams’ consultants is through consultant profiles which are included in the proposals. These are constructed as formalised ‘bios’ of each consultant, outlining their role at Branhams, details of their qualifications, experience prior to and at Branhams, and a list of any associations to which they are affiliated. P2004 and P2007 also include black and white passport-sized photographs of the consultants being proposed for the work. Although these profiles provide some insight into individual consultants, they do so only from an organisational rather than an interpersonal perspective. The outcome is that institutional trust and organisational trust are more likely to be enabled by the inclusion of this personnel data than is interpersonal trust, perhaps with the exception of interpersonal trust between the prospective client and Branhams’ Director.

#### **4.9 Summary of case study**

The intent of this study was to assess how trust is discursively initiated in client relationships through analysis of Branhams’ business proposals. Although the study does not consider whether trust subsequently developed in these relationships, the fact that the proposals were favourably received is taken as evidence that the proposals played a role in initiating trust.

Discursive analysis of the proposals, supported by analysis of data from Branhams' website and sustainability reports, has provided empirical evidence in support of theoretical views of

institutional trust, organisational trust and interpersonal trust and has more specifically provided discursive evidence in support of McKnight *et al*'s (1998) theories of initial trust formation in new organisational relationships. In relation to this, the study has examined how structural assurances and situational normality, which are held to be the foundation of institutional trust, are discursively constructed. In this case, facets of initial trust are shaped by drawing on linguistic markers of an established and recognised social and institutional order and through Branham's offering to the client an alignment of its practices with what is likely to be already 'known' and 'trusted' by the client. This translates in the proposal to the appropriation of recognised Discourses and borrowings from SIKs taken from the domain of Auditing and Accountancy.

To initiate organisational trust the study analyses how Branham's constructs evidence of ability and reliability. What emerges in relation to this form of trust is that the proposals not only describe these aspects but also enact them thereby providing explicit support for Branham's contention that it 'walks the talk'.

Finally, the initiation of interpersonal trust is examined through examination of how the organisation-client relationship is defined in the proposals. The study highlights aspects of 'conversationalisation' (Fairclough, 2010) such as use of first person singular and inclusive 'we' and also examines how Branham's simulates dialogue within the proposals through the use of client quotations and the inclusion of personally oriented letters to clients.

The overall finding in this case is that Branham's proposals emphasise the initiation of impersonal over personal forms of trust. In this case study, this may be attributable to the relative immaturity of the sustainability assurance industry as well as a consequence of its controversial nature. These features of Branham's field of practice necessitate, in this case, the development of institutional trust as a pre-requisite to other types of trust.

A further possibility is that this finding is, in fact, an outcome of the rather restricted data set which is made up of written material; three proposals, Branham's website and sustainability reports. The study was only minimally informed by interactional data; the interview with the Director and informal discussions with some of Branham's consultants. The conclusion drawn may simply be that it is much more difficult to develop personal forms of trust through written business media, and in the absence of personal contact, than would be the case with more collaborative or face-to-face modes of communication.

#### 4.10 Limitations and implications

This study has provided much needed discursive evidence in support of a number of theoretical understandings of trust types as highlighted in the preceding section (4.9). Its findings are, however, limited by its being a single study from which it is hard to draw generalisable conclusions. This is all the more so because the relative under-representation of participants in this study, in particular Branhams' clients, represents a risk when making claims about the findings in this case. Although firmly grounded in both trust and linguistic theory, the study might be criticised as being too focused on linguistic markers of trust and neglecting the deeper insights that participant narratives about the relationship between trust and business proposals might have yielded. Future studies should take this into account and seek where possible to better represent both sides of the trust equation: the perspectives of both trustor and trustee.

There is little doubt that this study would have benefitted from direct input from Branhams' clients concerning their views of CSR, whether sustainability auditing was a new venture for them and, if not, what level of trust they already had in this practice. Additionally, it would have been useful to address with Branhams' clients the question of why they had selected Branhams from a larger group of applicants and what role the proposal played in this decision. Client responses to questions such as the following would have allowed more definitive conclusions to be drawn about the extent to which clients placed their trust on the basis of Branhams' proposals:

- i. To what extent did the way(s) in which the proposal was presented influence your decision to award the contract to Branhams?
- ii. Were there specific features of the proposal that swayed your decision to offer Branhams the contract for work?
- iii. What perception of Branhams and the services it could offer did you draw from reading the proposals?
- iv. To what extent do you rely on proposals when making decisions about the awarding of a work contract?
- v. What other sources of information about prospective organisations did you draw on prior to awarding the contract?
- vi. How significant do you think the proposal is in initiating trust with prospective client organisations?

The responses to these questions would also have allowed for a much clearer determination of whether linguistic markers reflect a perceived institutional order and/or provide evidence of reliability and ability and whether this is significant in clients' decision-making. Such responses might also provide insights into whether aspects of the proposal, which represent a more personal client-organisation relationship, such as 'conversationalisation', are favoured by the

client or not. Greater participant input into this study, preferably through the kind of participant narratives favoured by the participant perspective of the MPF (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.3.2), would have allowed for a thicker description to be provided in this study. This might have changed the conclusions, suggested in section 4.9, that proposals inherently favour impersonal over personal forms of trust.

A more general implication of this study for future trust research is that it has highlighted the significance of the business proposal in instigating organisation-client trust. Although there is an abundance of literature on how to write an effective business proposals, as any search of the internet will show, there is no academic research, that I could find, that has explicitly considered that this effectiveness might be linked to a business proposals' ability to instill trust. This study has provided empirical evidence in support of this proposition and further discourse analytic research of this type would potential extend and support this.

Due in large part to competition law which regulates anti-competitive corporate behaviour, notably referred to in the U.S. as 'antitrust law' (Taylor, 2006), it is likely that the business proposal will remain an important document in the process of tendering for work. Thus examination not only of how such documents are constructed, but also of how they serve to construct the client-organisation relationship, is likely to prove useful in enhancing our understanding of the foundations of trust in these relationships.

Research might also consider the extent to which the business proposal specifically initiates relational forms of trust and thus the role that it plays in the formation of the relational organisation. Moreover, if research were to concentrate on proposals aligned to a specific practice or industry, as this study has done, it is likely that much would be revealed about how that industry, or practice, is perceived by the business world: all of which is relevant to ascertaining where, how and why organisation-client trust is placed.

As a post script to this study, it is worth noting that the accessibility of proposals to researchers is itself a matter of trust. Proposals harbor 'trade secrets' such as the proposed pricing of a contract and they are, by their very nature, confidential documents. Organisations willing to give up their 'trade secrets' to researchers need to trust that these secrets will not be divulged, especially to their competitors. This may have been a major obstacle in proposal research to date and account for the lack of prior research into this genre. In the increasingly competitive global climate in which organisations now operate, research access to business proposals may remain an issue. While the availability of a larger corpus of proposals would be the ideal for the type of research suggested here and would extend the findings of this study, in the current business climate the compilation of such a corpus is, in my opinion, likely to remain elusive.



## Case study 2

### **Trust work: a strategy for building organisation-stakeholder trust?**

‘Here we drink three cups of tea to do business: the first you are a stranger,

**the second you become a friend**

and the third you join our family, and for our family we are prepared to do anything—even die’

Mortensen & Relin (2006)

## Chapter 5

### 5.1 Overview of case study

This chapter presents the case of Gunz Dental (Gunz), a small to medium-sized enterprise (SME), which is currently attempting to implement a specific trust-building strategy (henceforth referred to as the TBS). The TBS was developed for Gunz by external consultants. The overall intention of Gunz management in seeking a targeted trust strategy was to strengthen trust across the organisation and thereby increase company profit. In its initial phase, the specific espoused aims of the TBS were to encourage greater levels of manager and employee accountability, improve manager-employee relationships, increase staff retention rates and break down the silo-mentality that had come to characterise Gunz's inter-departmental practices. During its first year, the TBS was deemed by management to have successfully met these aims and Gunz had experienced an increase in sales, a decrease in employee turnover and greater co-operation between departments. However, during its second year of implementation, the TBS appeared to be faltering. The key objective of this study was to assist Gunz in identifying why this might be the case.

At the heart of this chapter is what Smart (2011) would define as a 'discourse-oriented ethnographic study' (see Chapter 3, section 3.5.1) which took place over the course of two-and-a-half years and began eighteen months into implementation of the TBS. The study examined a very wide range of social and discursive practices and associated data (see section 5.2) that had been introduced or modified as a consequence of the TBS and assessed the extent to which this had mediated the development of trusting relationships and a climate of trust within the organisation. The current chapter is a summary of this work.

The findings of this study were unexpected and were largely revealed through ethnographic and discursive analysis of participant input. This input, and especially participant interviews, forms the greater part of the data set selected for this present chapter. Analysis of participant input revealed that managers and employees perceived the TBS differently and operationalised it in different ways. These different orientations to the TBS exposed underlying tensions in manager-employee relationships which were found to be an outcome of employees who simultaneously trusted and distrusted their managers. This finding provides empirical evidence in support of two-dimensional models of trust (e.g. Lewicki *et al*, 2006) (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.3) which propose that trust and distrust are distinct constructs that can co-exist in interpersonal relationships.

The chapter first discusses the analyst's perspective as an essential component of the MPF, outlines how the study was undertaken and presents an overview of participants (5.2 and its subsections). The chapter then focuses on the social institutional perspective of the MPF by discussing Gunz's history and traditions. This includes explanation of the pivotal role that Gunz's family business structure played on the choice and implementation of the TBS (5.3). Section 5.4 provides an overview of the TBS and follows this with analysis and discussion of selected extracts from the data set (5.5 & 5.6). Section 5.7 summarises the main findings of this study and section 5.8 discusses the implications of the study for future research. The practical relevance of the study is discussed in Chapter 7.

## **5.2 Initiating the study**

The following sub-sections of 5.2 focus on the analyst's perspective and the semiotic resource perspective of the MPF. In effect, they discuss my relationship with Gunz, provide an overview of the data set and introduce the study's participants.

### **5.2.1 Researcher relationship with Gunz Dental and data set**

This study represents a jointly problematised approach to research (Roberts & Sarangi, 1999; Candlin & Sarangi, 2007) (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.1) during which I worked closely with Gunz management and especially with Gunz's HR manager, who is referred to in this study as HR. My involvement with the organisation was viewed by Gunz's Management team as a way of gaining an 'independent' perspective on the TBS. The Managing Director and owner (henceforth MD) was explicitly interested in using a discourse analytic approach to examine the TBS having had experience with a 'discourse expert' in a former workplace. The outcome was that Gunz provided me with access to any personnel and company data that might facilitate this research.

Although I was not embedded within the organisation, and so did not work out of their offices, I met frequently with HR at Gunz's head office (based in Sydney, Australia) and additionally had frequent email and phone contact with HR over the course of this study. I also met with MD on a number of occasions both informally and formally. This included two meetings during which I conducted semi-structured audiotaped interviews. I attended strategy meetings about the TBS, training sessions for the TBS and a staff induction session. I spoke informally to Gunz staff on many occasions and, together with HR, conducted a large number of interviews with staff and management over the course of two years some of which were audiotaped. I also met several

times off site with one of the trust consultants (TC) responsible for developing the TBS and recorded a semi-structured, audio-taped, interview with her.

This study was consequently shaped and reshaped over the course of two-and-a-half years by regular input from the organisation and the participants that it aims to represent. Findings, although unexpected and confronting for management, were held by management to accurately represent trust issues at Gunz at the time of this study.

### **5.2.2 Overview of semiotic resources**

An overview of the resources drawn upon in this study was presented in Chapter 3 Table 3.2, but is expanded upon in the following section.

A very wide range of data was collected and examined over the two-and-a-half year period of research and includes:

1. written data; field notes from regular site visits, staff surveys, statistical data from staff surveys, internal newsletters, company website, company profile, company reports, change implementation plans, feedback to and from suggestion boxes, emails.
2. ethnographic data from attendance at; management and staff meetings, employee induction and training sessions, presentations by the TC.
3. interactional data from; semi-structured interviews with Gunz Executive, Senior Management and employees (see Table 6.1) and the Trust Consultant (TC). Informal discussions with employees and managers.

#### **5.2.2.1 Approach to resources**

In line with the research approach outlined in Table 3.1 Chapter 3, data was examined through several different analytic phases. This phasing allowed for selection and categorisation of trust themes that occurred across the data sources and then for a finer-grained level of analysis on sources that were considered of most relevance to this study. These phases were not distinct but overlapped and operated iteratively throughout the study. The phases focused broadly on three different perspectives of the MPF and employed different analytic tools.

The first phase was ethnographic and focussed on investigation of the social institutional perspective. This consisted of selecting and examining documentation such as Gunz's company profile, company reports, the website, values and mission statements and operational

documentation which defined Gunz's processes and procedures. This phase also drew on informal discussions with Gunz staff and management and observational field notes taken from participation in staff induction and training sessions specific to the TBS. The aims of this phase were twofold: firstly, to gain an understanding of Gunz's prevailing 'discourse system' (Scollon & Scollon, 2001) or 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1972; 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 2005) and how this had evolved and shaped Gunz's organisational culture and secondly, to establish analyst-participant relationships. The further, more general, aim of this ethnographic phase was to draw out from what Geertz (1983) calls 'convergent data' the 'mutually reinforcing network of social understandings' (Geertz, 1983, p. 156-157) that shaped participants' perceptions of Gunz and specifically of the TBS.

The second phase focussed on the social practice perspective of the MPF. This phase aimed to identify practices that had been introduced or modified as a consequence of the TBS and analyse their influence on trust at Gunz. Mediated Discourse Analytic (MDA) (Scollon, 1998) provided the methodological tools during this phase and revealed an emerging 'nexus of practice' at Gunz (Chapter 3, section 3.3.4) that was having both positive and negative effects on the progress of the TBS.

The third phase highlighted the participant perspective of the MPF and included micro-level linguistic analysis of participant input. This phase drew on techniques and tools from CA (conversation analysis) to illuminate how managers and employees talked about the TBS. This phase was significant for identifying participants' cognitive and affective orientations to the TBS. Evidence from this phase ultimately confirmed the HR manager's and my suspicions that the TBS's ineffectiveness was an outcome of managerial inefficiency.

### **5.2.3 Focus on the participant perspective and overview of participants**

Growing significance is attached in discourse studies to participant input (e.g. Cicourel, 1992, 2007; Sarangi & Candlin, 2001; Crichton 2010) and this was a crucial resource for this study. Participant input took the form of informal discussions and semi-structured audiotaped interviews with executive management, senior and middle management and employees. Participant input was also collected indirectly in the form of staff contributions to 'feedback' practices that were introduced as a consequence of the TBS. This feedback data included staff contributions to Gunz's monthly staff newsletter, staff suggestion boxes and emails. Information was also collected from informal presentations given by individual staff members at regular staff lunches. These presentations were instituted as an outcome of the TBS and seen

as a way of increasing organisation-wide awareness of staff members and their roles across the organisation.

Although widely used as a research tool in empirical enquiry, in this study, participant interviews represent a recognised and embedded practice at Gunz. Since the inception of the TBS, both formal and informal interviews with staff had become a means through which feedback on the TBS was provided to Gunz management. Random interviews with staff were conducted by HR as a means of tracking the progress of the TBS. Each month at least one member of staff was more formally interviewed by HR, or their unit supervisor, to provide material for articles in the monthly staff newsletter. Notes were taken at these interviews and they were similarly framed to those that were specifically conducted for this study in that both sought staff views on working at Gunz, the TBS and what the staff member felt could be done to more effectively implement the TBS. Although atypically the interviews used for this study were audiotaped and subject to the individual's written consent, participants appeared not to view them differently from the other interviews and feedback practices that had become embedded at Gunz.

My categorisation of the interviews as a social practice in this case study does not diminish the need for me, as researcher, to approach the interviews with a 'heightened reflexivity' (Talmy 2010, p143). Neither do I intend to suggest that the interviews used in this study represent a 'single truth' (Mazzei & Jackson, 2009, p. 1). However, it is fair to claim that, in the context of Gunz, the interviews drawn on in this chapter represent more than a conduit for accessing research data as they also provided the research with a window into issues associated with the TBS at the time of this present study.

Although the participant interviews conducted at Gunz for this study were inevitably shaped by their interactional context and the guided focus on the TBS, analysis and discussion of the interview data takes account of both the 'what and the how' (Talmy, 2010, p. 132). In other words, both the content of the interview and linguistic and pragmatic features evident from micro-level DA are considered in making claims about the findings of this study. Further, the triangulation of findings from the interviews with other available sources of data means that the interview data in this study does not 'speak for itself'. Rather, it is considered in relation to other factors such as the influence of Gunz's organisational culture, the status of participant relationships, and the affordances and constraints on what participants have, or have not, said in the interviews.

Participant interviews were conducted on site, normally in HR's office, or in one of Gunz's meeting rooms. They were face-to-face and semi-structured and conducted either by me or HR.

Interviews ran for between 30 minutes and 1 hour and prior to my arrival had relied on the interviewer taking notes. Following my arrival these participant interviews were audiotaped whenever possible. When less formal discussions with participants occurred, for example, over coffee or lunch, HR and I made a point of noting down pertinent points from these conversations as soon as was possible. The data set related to this aspect of the study thus consists of both field notes and audio recordings. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to talk about their reasons for working at Gunz, their views of the TBS and its associated practices and anything that they felt the organisation could be doing better. The MD and the Financial Director (FD), who co-own Gunz, were also asked at interview about their reasons for adopting the TBS. I also conducted an offsite interview with one of the consultants who had had input into the trust strategy (henceforth TC).

Given the space limitations of this study, it has been necessary to select interviews that best represent the typical views of executive, middle management and employees, to the TBS. The decision as to which interviews should be included in this study was made in collaboration with HR. However, the final selection of extracts, to include in this study, that illustrate typical findings, is my own. The selection was an outcome of my immersion in the complete corpus of interviews.

Table 5.1 provides an overview of participants, their position within Gunz Dental's hierarchy, their gender and how they are referred to in this study.

**Table 5.1: Study participants**

<b>Position in hierarchy</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Gender</b>
<b>Executive Management</b>	MD	Managing director and majority owner	M
	FD	Financial Director and part owner	M
	HR	HR manager – responsible for implementation and follow up of the trust strategy	F
<b>Management</b>	M1	Senior manager	M
	M2	Middle manager	M
<b>Employee</b>	E1	Employee	F
	E2	Employee	F
<b>Trust Consultant</b>	TC	Consultant responsible for the Entente strand of the strategy	F

Interviews were initially transcribed verbatim to locate and confirm categories and recurrent themes across the data sources. Following this, salient extracts were re-analysed at a finer-grained level of analysis using Jefferson's (1984) approach to transcription (see Appendix 1) to re-consider both content and para-linguistic features. The aim of this micro-level analysis was to identify the points at which participants' subjective experiences and opinions about the TBS aligned as well as where they diverged. Prosodic features such as emphasis, laughter, intakes of breath, prolongation, hesitancy and pausing were noted. These provided insight into aspects of participants' cognition and affect that were evident at the time of the interview and which were held to be associated with participant trust.

### **5.3 Shaping Gunz Dental's culture**

Gunz Dental ([www.gunz.com.au](http://www.gunz.com.au)) is the largest Australian owned importer of dental equipment and supplies in Australia and New Zealand. It represents around 120 international and local manufacturers and stocks over 35,000 products. It distributes to over 7000 dentists and oral health clinics across all states of Australia and in New Zealand, employs 86 staff and has 6 offices across Australia and one in Auckland, New Zealand. Its head office is in Sydney, Australia and it was from this site that this research was conducted.

Gunz Dental was established in 1936 and run as a family-owned-and-operated business until 2006. At that time, none of the remaining family members wished to remain with the company and it was bought out by the then general manager (the current MD) and the Chief Financial Officer (FD). The company is hierarchically structured and reflects the traditional pyramid structure in which the owner(s) and executive management sit at the apex with consecutive layers of senior managers, mid-line managers and employees, beneath them. This structure is typical of many family-owned businesses in which decision-making and corporate knowledge is concentrated at the top of the organisation, within the family unit, or amongst its selected representatives. At Gunz Dental this structure continued up until the late 1990s.

Even when 'outside' managers were bought into the organisation, their role was limited by the company's family management structure. The current MD, who came in as general manager of the Dental division ten years prior to buying out the company, notes that when he started at Gunz Dental:

### **Extract 5.1: MD**

the management were making all the decisions and telling people what to do (.) but in the early days the owner used to open every bit of mail so he opens everything and all the mail got read and then with a little note on it to say what to do about it ((laughs)) you know **I** came in and my job (.) and he wasn't even going to share the P and L [profit and loss statement] with me you know and I said I'm not going to get to do my job if you don't give me a P and L.

The top down style of management referred to by MD in Extract 5.1, characterises Gunz Dental as communicatively uni-directional and power centric (Hall *et al*, 2001). This orientation typified decision-making and communications up until the time that the TBS had been introduced.

Although Gunz Dental had been evolving prior to the change of ownership, cultural change had been relatively slow and was, according to discussions with Gunz' managers and analysis of organisational documentation, most often the result of extrinsic rather than intrinsic forces. The advent of new technologies such as email had forced the former owner into a position from which he had no option but to relinquish some control of the company's communications. Likewise, the introduction of digitalisation had forced the closure of the company's photographic operations.

Despite Gunz Dental going through several periods of reorganisation following these technological advancements and eventually being streamlined from six to three business units, it still displays stable and deeply embedded cultural behaviours. These include implicit, rather than explicit, rules that govern its standards of behaviour which rely on 'weak signals and do not need rigorous systems of control' (Mari, 2010, p. 385). For example, even though Gunz has a formal disciplinary procedure, it has never, according to HR, been applied in practice. Gunz's culture is also characterised by a prevalence of emotionally based attachments between managers and staff and this has resulted in a caring and socially oriented workplace culture. Gunz also remains reliant on what MD refers to as 'partners' (see Extract 5.2) such as clients and suppliers, with whom it maintains informal non-contractual 'gentlemen's agreements' that are based on trust (see Extract 5.2). Practices such as these are typical of family businesses and are, as Mari (2010) comments, usually resistant or slow to change.

### **5.3.1 Internal influences on the trust strategy**

Sociological and business administration research frequently draw a direct link between family businesses and trust. Jones (1983) argues that family businesses commonly display cultures that

are based on deeper levels of trust which are affectively based. This arises because the family business culture is steeped in the history and tradition of the founding family and underpinned by family-oriented values, beliefs and goals (Hall *et al*, 2010). Hall (2010) suggests that the workforce in a family-owned business is likely to be exposed to trust on a daily basis, as trust is often evident in how the business operates and forms relationships with its stakeholders. Mari too explains that family businesses tend to be governed by ‘underlying informal agreements based on affect rather than on utilitarian logic or contractual obligation’ (Mari, 2010, p. 385). The affective underpinnings of these agreements would suggest that they are primarily founded on relational forms of trust and that family businesses operate and are sustained by trust-based relationships. This type of environment is evident at Gunz and is alluded to by MD in Extract 5.2 as a significant rationale for adoption of the TBS:

**Extract 5.2: MD**

what attracted me to the strategy was that it reinforced what we were always about and what Gunz has been about for generations. We are a 75 year old organisation. We still have some partners in our business that stem from the first day of Gunz Dental and those arrangements have passed through now three generations and it’s all on a handshake and that for me is fa:ntastic, you know, I lo:ve that sort of thing and that integrity between two parties (...) it’s a good way to do business.

Extract 5.2 shows MD’s support for a continuance of the informal trust-based agreements on which Gunz Dental has evidently been operating. His change of footing in Extract 5.2 from ‘we’ to the first person ‘I’ suggests that he aligns both professionally and personally with this way of doing business. His choice and the extra emphasis on ‘fa:ntastic’ and ‘lo:ve’ are further indications of the importance of such an approach to MD.

It is worth noting that MD defines this orientation as one of interpersonal *integrity* and, in so doing, he echoes trust theory which claims integrity to be a necessary pre-condition for trust (e.g. Mayer *et al*, 1995; Butler, 1991) (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.1). It is also worth noting that for MD integrity clearly means the ability to take people at their word: ‘it’s all on a handshake’.

Gunz’s culture was also characterised in participant interviews and discussions as based on managerial benevolence (e.g. Extract 5.3; 5.11). Mayer *et al* (1995) argue that a perception of trustee benevolence is a pre-condition for organisational trust (Chapter 2, section 2.5.1). At Gunz, a reputation of managerial benevolence has arisen because the founder and his family displayed care and concern to their workforce that, as both MD and HR noted in informal discussions, went ‘above and beyond the call of duty’ (HR). Although the term ‘benevolence’ was never used directly by participants in the study, one of the recurrent themes in the interview

data related to managerial care and concern towards employees (see Extract 5.12) and in this way management and specifically executive management was characterised indirectly as benevolent. As M1, one of Gunz's managers commented:

**Extract 5. 3: M1**

we have been accused of being too nice sometimes ... the MD has said he thinks the management team is too nice... so maybe we are too nice (...) but I don't apologise for being too nice (M1).

Although M1's use and repetition of 'nice' in Extract 5.3 implies managerial benevolence at Gunz, he is also reflecting on whether this is positive for Gunz or not. His use of epistemic modality 'may be', plus the lengthy pause and change of footing from 'we' to 'I', suggests that even though he ultimately supports this orientation and so does not 'apologise for being too nice,' he perhaps recognises that there is potentially an issue with such an approach.

This orientation to managerial benevolence has resulted in two trust-related outcomes for Gunz. On the one hand, the company has for many years enjoyed a relatively loyal employee base that displays trust in the company's executive management and the decisions that they take on behalf of the organisation. On the other hand, the focus on benevolent leadership has created, as Butler might put it, a management style that has tended to be 'soft on people' rather than 'hard on problems' (Butler, 1999, p. 218) a view that, as evidenced by this study, came to be reinforced by the TBS.

Taken together, the views expressed in this section (5.3.1) strongly suggest that Gunz Dental had a pre-established culture of relationally based trust prior to adoption of the TBS and that the TBS was selected, in large part, because it aligned with this internal culture. However, several external factors also influenced the selection of the trust-specific strategy as the means to implement cultural change at Gunz. These are discussed in the following section, 5.3.2.

### **5.3.2 External influences on the trust strategy**

The contemporary organisation has been considered by Gee *et al* (1996) in terms of a 'New Work Order'. This New Work Order is characterised by flatter management structures in which 'hierarchy is dead' (Gee *et al*, 1996, p. 5) and workers together 'engage in meaningful work amidst a collaborative environment of mutual commitment and trust' (Gee *et al*, 1996, p. 5). The New Work Order represents a change to 'habitus' for managers and employees (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.3) and promises more democratic and satisfying workplaces as a

consequence of increased employee empowerment. This empowerment is held to be achieved through greater levels of employee participation and a more democratic distribution of knowledge, both within and across organisations (McDonald, 2004; Gee *et al*, 1996; Iedema, 2003).

The participatory paradigm that typifies the New Work Order continues to fuel both academic and corporate debate. Empowering employees in their day-to-day work and expecting them to act as, what Gordon *et al* (1996) term the ‘entrepreneur(s) of the self,’ is tantamount to placing more trust in employees. However, as McDonald (2004) notes, this may be merely an exercise in organisational control of employees and their identities (e.g. McDonald, 2004, p. 925).

Supporting the latter view, Iedema argues that the New Work Order typically entails employees ‘being co-opted into participating in ways and at levels that engage them with responsibilities previously the preserve of middle and higher management’ (Iedema, 2003, p. 111). This is a situation which, as Iedema implies, is not always welcomed by employees who may have neither the skills, nor the inclination, to take on self-directed roles at work.

The participatory paradigm also presents many challenges for managers as they strive to reposition themselves in relation to their workforces. The paradox of employee empowerment initiatives is that they have the potential to drive organisational power and control back into the hands of senior or executive management because they lower the status of middle management who are recast as facilitators, rather than managers, of such initiatives and who, as a consequence, no longer have anyone to ‘manage’. Thus empowerment initiatives which appear to promote trust in one area of an organisation may in reality, as scholars such as Sewell & Wilkinson (1992) suggest, be damaging it in another.

At Gunz Dental, implementation of the TBS was in part a response to the company’s tardiness in aligning itself with the contemporary organisational climate and the New Work Order. The TBS was also defined by Gunz management as a conscious attempt on its part to provide employees with the ‘opportunity to be responsible and accountable’ (MD) for their own work practices. In offering this ‘opportunity’, the TBS was not overtly framed as an attempt to coerce or control staff but was represented as an expression of Gunz’s family tradition of care and concern for employees (see section 5.3.1). In reality, however, its effect was to recast mid-line managers as facilitators rather than managers of an employee empowerment process.

A further external driver of the TBS was Gunz’s financial status. In the four years prior to its change of ownership, Gunz had experienced flat economic performance which was attributed to the company’s two main competitors merging into a ‘super-competitor’. This had a negative effect on company profits and staff morale and Gunz uncharacteristically began to experience

staff retention issues. A further consequence was that a ‘silo’ mentality developed across the business units as each unit became more focused on shoring up its own reputation to stave off external competition and the potential for redundancies. The outcome, prior to implementation of the TBS, was that Gunz had become, according to the FD, ‘quite dysfunctional’ and relationships between some of the business unit managers were noticeably strained.

In considering strategies to address these externally driven issues, MD and FD, as Gunz’s new owners, saw a need to improve accountability at all levels of the organisation whilst at the same time retaining Gunz’s culture of family values. As MD explains:

**Extract 5.4: MD**

We’ve been evolving this trust and (1.2) integrity thing, family values, but needed some commercial disciplines in there, so the trust strategy was a way to reinforce that, a way of helping to make people (.h) well to help them, become (.) comfortable with making decisions and that we trusted them to do that.

Extract 5.4 throws important light on the intrinsically conflicted conceptualisation of trust that drove the choice of the TBS. We note not only MD’s repeated reference to ‘integrity’ (see also Extract 5. 1) but also his tentativeness in explaining his rationale for adopting the TBS. The lengthy pause of 1.2 seconds, as well as MD’s loose description of trust in terms of an ‘integrity thing’, shows that MD is struggling to find the right words to explain the rationale for adoption of a TBS. This is further reinforced by MD’s audible drawing in of breath (.h) whilst attempting to explain the aim of the TBS, as well as the perceptible pause before he comes up with the word ‘comfortable’. The presence of these linguistic and prosodic features in Extract 5.4 reflects underlying tensions that emerged again and again during the course of this study. Many of these were attributable to the contradictions inherent in attempting to retain family values whilst simultaneously introducing ‘commercial imperatives’ as a related consideration. This conflict is further reflected in the approach that was eventually taken to the development of the TBS, which involved the employment of two rather than a single consulting group.

**5.4 Overview of the trust-building strategy (TBS): a case of competing discourses.**

Organisations are inherently strategic in that they operate on the basis of actions that are goal directed and which are primarily aimed at ensuring competitive advantage for the organisation (Jones, 2009). A business strategy is, by definition, the outcome of calculative, rational decision-making processes and is associated with measurable outcomes. As such, a strategy is intrinsically antithetical for developing relational trust. As Miranda & Klement note:

Trust is not and never should be deployed strategically. It is an authentic condition and attribute that arises from deeply held values; it is something that is earned over time.

(Miranda & Klement, 2009, p. 29)

This presents a challenge for organisations such as Gunz that are consciously seeking to develop trust whilst trying to maintain competitive commercial advantage. A further challenge is that business strategies, in general, are seldom made explicit to employees. They typically remain at the level of senior or executive management and are commonly written in what Henderson (2003) refers to as ‘managerialist discourse’ from which employees are largely excluded.

In this respect, the TBS at Gunz was atypical and was designed to be specifically open and accessible to all staff. It was an amalgamation of two different strategic orientations to trust derived from two different consulting organisations: Harts (a pseudonym) and Entente. It was this amalgamation of two distinct strategies that was, in large part, responsible for the tensions arising in the TBS’s second year of implementation. Each strand of the TBS was discursively different and resulted overall in a strategy that was characterised by competing and conflicting discourses.

A summary and comparison of the two strategies is provided in the following sections (5.4.1 and 5.4.2). This summary is not critically evaluative and is aimed at explaining the discursive and conceptual differences between Harts' and Entente’s approaches. Critical evaluation of the TBS occurs, in this case, through analysis and discussion of how the TBS operated in practice and how Gunz staff oriented to it.

### **5.4.1 Harts’ approach**

Harts was contracted to deliver one-on-one coaching and mentoring over a three-month period to each of Gunz’s executive and senior managers and to follow this up with a number of management team sessions. As it consisted of face-to-face, ‘confidential’ coaching, direct research access to Harts’ practices was unavailable; however, the focus and much of the content of these sessions became clear during participant interviews and discussions.

Harts' strategy was aimed at enhancing the performance of individual managers through improving managerial accountability and responsibility to the organisation. The coaching was ‘top down’ and focussed on improving managerial behaviour and, through this, overall organisational performance. This is evidenced in the terminology which framed Harts'

approach. Its main aim was for managers to attain ‘personal mastery’ and it defined organisational effectiveness in terms of managers who operated as ‘complete’ ‘whole’ and ‘unimpaired’ individuals; terms which occurred frequently in my discussions with senior and executive managers.

Harts' overall strategy was also outlined in my interview with M1 who, in Extract 5.5, describes Harts' four-part accountability model:

#### **Extract 5.5: M1**

The [Harts] training gave us a specific model for accountability and the model is around defining clearly with the person that you wish to hold accountable (.) what it is that you are requiring them to do. The second aspect is to get from that person to say ‘yes’ look I agree that, that’s the job or the budget or that’s the task. (.) The third one is that you have to have a relationship of competency with that individual so you have to believe as their manager that they are capable of doing the job or, if they are on your senior management team, you have to believe that the manager you are working with in their area of responsibility is competent (.) so you have to have that relationship of competency. And the last part of the model is that you need to have clearly understood what the consequences are of non-delivery of that agreed task or responsibility.

As M1 notes in Extract 5.5, Harts' model was to be applied across Gunz. However, in the participant interviews it was significant that when M1 and other managers, who had undertaken executive coaching, mentioned Harts they almost exclusively referred to the application of Harts' model within the management team rather than with employees. Additionally, as will be discussed later in this study, when attempts were made to apply Harts' model *in situ* it was met with considerable resistance from employees (see Extract 5.13).

#### **5.4.2 Entente’s Approach**

Gunz contracted Entente to develop a trust-based strategy for application across the organisation and with external stakeholders such as suppliers and customers. As the first phase of implementation of Entente’s strategy was internally focussed, its application with external stakeholders is not discussed in this study. The following description of Entente’s approach draws heavily on my discussions with the trust consultant (TC) and on the book that is presented to trainees, including Gunz staff members, when being inducted into the application of Entente’s model.

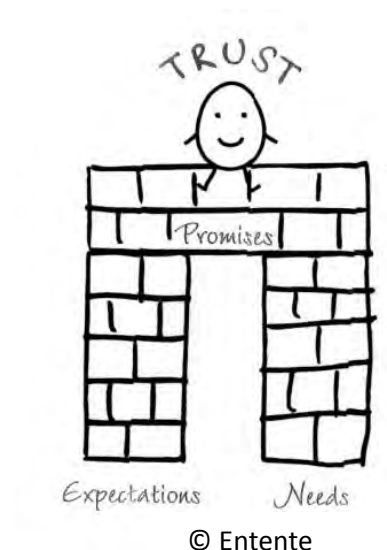
Entente describes itself as a trust consultancy whose aim is to improve trust in organisations, schools and social groups. It is described on its website as:

One of the world's leaders in teaching you what trust actually is how it works, how you could be breaking it down in your business, in your home and in your community, and what you need to do to actively build and restore trust.

(<http://www.entente.com.au>. retrieved 3 Nov 2010)

Entente's trust strategy pivots around a metaphor and model for trust that is visually represented. In the model, which is reproduced in Figure 5.1, trust is envisaged as an egg, similar to Humpty Dumpty, sitting on a 'trust wall'. The TC explains that the egg is representative of trust because, when used in baking, an egg has binding qualities just as trust has a binding quality in relationships. The egg also represents the fragility of trust in that both eggs and trust are easily broken and once broken are not easily fixed.

The 'trust wall' on which the 'trust egg' sits is made up of expectations, needs and promises or ENPs.

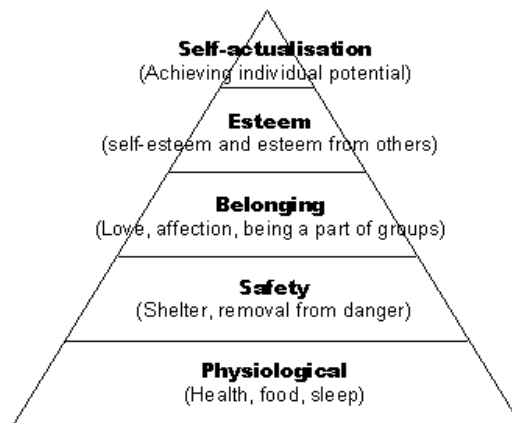


**Figure 5.1: The ENP trust wall**

The metaphor of the trust wall (or the ENP model) represents the Entente conceptualisation of trust. When applied to organisations, this conceptualisation depicts trust in terms of how 'we manage people's expectations of us, our business, our products and services, meeting people's needs and keeping promises' (TC).

The two pillars of the trust wall represent expectations and needs with each brick signifying a single expectation and need. The TC notes that expectations arise from our social, psychological and discursive experiences so that 'we all have expectations in every relationship we go into and in every interaction with people, companies, products and services' (Hall 2007, p. 17).

Needs in the ENP model are based on Maslow's (1943) 'Hierarchy of Needs' (see Figure 5.2). This represents what Maslow perceived to be the five stages of human need in ascending order of priority. These needs were defined by Maslow as physiological, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualisation needs. The ENP model allows for each layer of Maslow's hierarchy to be considered by individuals in relation to what they 'need' in order to place their trust in other parties.



**Figure 5.2 Representation of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs**

The ENP model defines expectations and needs as 'belonging' to the individual whereas promises that are represented by the top of the trust wall are collective. Since promises are made to you by another person, a company, a product, or a service, they are intrinsically 'owned' by more than one person.

TC provided a detailed explanation of how ENPs work together to develop trust:

The entire process of trusting is placing this fragile 'trust egg' on a balance of our expectations and needs, and the promises the other party has made to us, hopeful that all will remain in balance. When some of our expectations are not met, or some promises are not kept, those bricks start disappearing from the wall and our trust, the egg, is in serious danger of falling and breaking. So it is on the combination of these three things eventuating that we choose to place our trust: expectations, needs, promises

(Hall, 2007, p. 22).

In the organisational context, the ENP model can be used in many different ways, for example, as a communications strategy, as a strategy for designing operational processes and procedures, or for writing position statements. How the TBS was operationalised at Gunz is discussed in subsequent sections of this case study.

The ENP model at Gunz was specifically targeted to seek indirect and direct improvements in three different ways. These outcomes were defined by TC as the 3Rs of; Results, Retention and Relationships and were equated to improving profit, reducing staff turnover and improving staff morale and employee-manager relationships. The Entente portion of the TBS sought to provide quantifiable evidence of these outcomes which could be used for future decision-making.

### **5.4.3 Comparison of Harts' and Entente's approaches**

A number of issues highlighted during the course of this study were identified as a consequence of the TBS emanating from two different, and ostensibly conflicting, discourse domains. A summary of these differences is provided in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 shows how Harts' coaching is framed by 'managerialist' discourse (Henderson, 2003). This is typically self-referential and centres on instilling in managers the attributes that, in Harts view, are required for effective 'accountable' behaviour. Nominalisations such as 'competence', 'responsibility', 'accountability', 'leadership' and 'mastery', dominate the strategy's terminology. The strategy's reliance on these nominalisations and associated manager-speak, has the effect of creating social distance by discursively excluding employees from this managerially oriented discourse domain. Further, the focus on managerial attributes also had a distancing effect on Gunz's managers. Lexis such as 'accountability' and 'competence' does not encourage participants to 'act competently or accountably' but rather to adopt behaviours that demonstrate 'competence or accountability'. Although a seemingly subtle linguistic difference, it was, in large part, the difficulty that managers had in activating the attributes inherent to Harts' strategy that was ultimately problematic for Gunz's managers (see section 5.5.3). Moreover, when managers attempted to apply Harts' terminology in practice, it was viewed by employees as a 'big stick' approach to management (see section 5.5.3.1 and Extract 5.12).

**Table 5.2: Comparison of Harts' and Entente's strands of the TBS**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Harts</b>	<b>Entente</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Executive coaching	Trust-building strategy
<b>Audience</b>	Managers	All staff, including managers
<b>Main purpose of strategy</b>	Behavioural change of managers	Changing organisational culture to improve performance by building stronger trust-based workplace relationships
<b>Form</b>	Top down uni-directional	Participatory: ask and discuss
<b>Discourse domain</b>	Specialised (managerialist) discourse  'management-speak'	Universal non-specialised language  'lifeworld' discourse
<b>Main theme</b>	Personal Mastery	ENPs
<b>Typical 'key' lexis associated with the strategy.</b>	Competence, responsibility, accountability, leadership, impediment	Expectations, needs, promises  Trust wall
<b>Examples of use of terminology</b>	'The culture that we would like embedded through the company is the need to be whole, complete and unimpaired' (MD)	'Someone has taken a brick out of my wall'(i.e. broken a promise to me) (E1)  'We understand the importance of acting on all the feedback from the Entente survey and suggestion box ideas in order to build and strengthen the two pillars of your trust wall; expectations & needs'(MD)

In contrast, the ENP terminology is not specifically organisational and does not require any technical or specialist knowledge. Its association with a metaphor that can be graphically represented also makes it accessible to those with lower levels of literacy or education. It is worth noting that the ENP model has been used in primary schools to help children understand the significance of developing trust in their friendships and has been specifically applied to anti-bullying initiatives.

A direct link has been made between the use of metaphor and the development of workplace trust. This link occurs because metaphors allow for sensitive personal experiences or emotions and feelings to be addressed in a 'safe way' in a workplace context (see Milne *et al*, 2006, Cameron & Masden, 2009). The relationship between metaphor and trust is a main focus of the

third case study so will not be discussed in further detail here, however, as is clear from analysis of the participant interviews, the terminology of the ENP was held by Gunz employees to be an effective means of addressing problematic interpersonal issues that arose at Gunz (see section 5.6.3).

## **5.5 Focus on social practices arising from the TBS**

The sub-sections of section 5.5 highlight the social practice perspective of the MPF. I begin by providing broad analysis of several practices, specifically workshops and a staff trust survey, that were introduced into Gunz by way of implementing the TBS. Subsequent discussion focuses on the significance of these and other mediating social practices to defining a ‘nexus’ of feedback practices at Gunz.

### **5.5.1 Stage 1: Implementation workshops**

Introductory workshops were delivered by HR and TC. They were held at all of Gunz’s sites with TC and HR being flown to Gunz’s out-of-Sydney offices to deliver the workshops. The purpose of the workshops was to introduce the TBS and provide staff with the opportunity to give initial feedback on the ENP model. Workshops were attended by all staff. They represented a unique organisational practice, of a type, that had never before been used at Gunz. Staff reaction to the workshops was, according to HR, that:

#### **Extract 5. 6: HR**

Staff were quite shocked that as an organisation we asked them what their thoughts were because certainly not in m:y time but from history (.) from what I can gather we:ve NEVER done that previously.

Extract 5.6 is significant for indicating the initial effect that the TBS had at Gunz. Most notable is that HR chooses the word ‘shock’ to describe the staff response to the workshops. The choice of this strong emotion, although coupled with the softener ‘quite’ reinforces the point that HR subsequently makes, i.e. that a participatory forum of this type was unique for Gunz. As HR stresses through her emphasis on the word ‘NEVER’ and her reference to Gunz’s past, or ‘history’, staff had never previously been given the opportunity to provide input into how Gunz was to operate and be managed. Extract 5.6 also demonstrates that this initial attempt to recast Gunz’s culture as more in line with the New Work Order was not an insignificant change for employees who had, prior to this, not been given a voice in the organisational domain.

Trust researchers propose a strong correlation between cultural change and trust. Rousseau *et al* (1998) note that cultural change initiatives increase employees' sense of vulnerability because they are associated with the transmission of uncertainty about the future as well as with loss of the past. This occurs because:

If a corporate change requires individuals to change their attitudes or behaviours, then the employer is asking those people to discard old routines, perceptions and certainties and instead consider new ways of thinking, feeling and behaving

(Hope-Hailey *et al* 2010, p. 237)

By seeking staff input into the TBS at the implementation workshops, Gunz was asking its staff to behave in a way that had not previously been part of their workplace habitus. In turn, Gunz was also seeking employee alignment to this new form of practice. As Hope-Hailey *et al* (2010) suggest, change of the kind that Gunz was anticipating as an outcome of the TBS, required not only new ways of working but also cognitive and affective 'buy in' from staff. This 'buy in' is only possible if staff trust that the change will be beneficial and, in turn, trust management to deliver the change. This kind of trust is only likely to be gained from past experience of change within an organisation. Although change had previously occurred at Gunz, it had, as previously discussed, been relatively slow and had, moreover, been instigated by Gunz's benevolent family owner. Gunz staff's lack of previous experience with anything like the TBS, or the sweeping change that it was designed to introduce, inevitably put them in an initial state of uncertainty, or in HR's terms, 'shock' (Extract 5.6)

A second point arising from Extract 5.6 is that the introductory workshops provided a blueprint for the type of participatory practices that Gunz was trying to introduce into the organisation via the TBS. The introductory workshops were set up to be deliberately collaborative and interactive and to bring executive management, senior and middle management and employees together in one forum. This opportunity for dialogue was seen as an initial step in breaking down Gunz's silo mentality. The workshops were specifically designed to provoke staff input and, as HR comments in Extract 5.6, 'we asked them what their thoughts were'. This kind of questioning anticipates dialogue rather than a simple yes/no response and modelled the type of communicative practices that are intrinsic to the ENP model.

### **5.5.2. Stage 2: the Trust Survey**

Subsequent to the workshops, an online trust survey designed by the TC asked all staff, including executive management, to rate areas where Gunz was building or breaking down

trust. The survey used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. It asked all staff to rate their views of trust across six different areas of the organisation. These were:

1. Leadership
2. People Management
3. Marketing and Branding
4. Sales
5. Customer Service
6. Compliance and Governance

The trust survey also provided for further open comment on these six areas, or on other areas perceived by staff as relevant to developing trust at Gunz.

The trust survey was anonymous in that its results were sent directly to the TC. Interestingly, the survey returned what HR described as 'huge results' with a 97% return rate, including almost 17 pages of comments. These comments were, in the main, from employees and signified that they were eager to have a voice in how Gunz operated. This high response rate was also held by Gunz management to be indicative of a staff that was willing to both accept and help to drive change.

Gunz was rated most strongly on the trust survey in the area of sales with 'I trust the products and services that we are selling' scoring highest. The second highest rating was in the area of people management in response to 'My manager trusts me'. However, it was in the area of people management that Gunz also received its lowest ratings with the prompts: 'Management make sure that people feel that they belong', 'My manager provides me with constructive feedback' and 'Management do what they say they are going to do', receiving three of the lowest ratings overall.

It is not my intention in this study to critically evaluate questions of validity inherent in the design and implementation of surveys of this type, rather, I merely want to emphasise that the trust survey was responsible for mediating the direction that the TBS initially took. During its first year of implementation the TBS specifically focussed on improving the five lowest ranking scores on the trust survey.

Following the trust survey, a second round of workshops was held with staff to feed back the survey results and gather staff input into how Gunz might most effectively attend to the

survey's five lowest-rated items. Again, this series of workshops and the trust survey, provided evidence to staff that Gunz intended to change its culture to one that was more participatory.

### **5.5.3. Operationalising the trust strategy**

Eighteen months into implementation of the TBS, at the time at which this present research began, it was clear that the ENP strand of the TBS had taken effect at Gunz. The ENP model had been used to modify existing practices, or to introduce new practices across Gunz. ENP terminology had been used to review organisational values and goals, to rewrite Gunz's KPI's (key performance indicators) for all staff positions, for conducting performance reviews as well as for budget setting and budget discussions. In practice, this meant that discussions had taken place at the executive and senior management level to identify the expectations, needs and promises inherent to these organisational practices. Information about decisions taken on these practices was fed back to employees and their feedback sought on these decisions via a number of different channels such as in team meetings, emails, face-to-face discussions and through a staff newsletter.

At the employee level, individual staff members and teams literally drew their own trust walls. These were subsequently displayed on people's desks or hung on a nearby wall and used to mediate one-on-one and team discussions about work tasks, goals and performance. Participants also reported during informal discussions that, following initial implementation of the TBS, some staff had carried a handful of pebbles around in their pockets. They placed these on the desks of those who were felt to have 'taken a brick out of their wall', that is, had either broken promises to them or not met their needs and expectations. The pebbles mediated discussions on issues that, as several participants commented, would formerly have remained unaddressed (see for example, Extract 5.14).

The significance of these practices is that they did not just constitute new ways of communicating at Gunz; they had by the start of this study become an intrinsic part of Gunz's communicative culture. This was confirmed both by managers and employees in a number of informal discussions and also in the participant interviews. M1, for example, commented that:

#### **Extract 5.7: M1**

People day to day say something about ENPs so there is a sense that Entente is part of what we do... I have certainly seen people take the principles of Entente to heart (.) and believe that it is the standard for the way they operate within the business and the way the business operates.

Extract 5.7 suggests that ENPs have become an institutionalised practice. M1 clearly defines Entente not in terms of interaction but rather as action so that it is ‘part of what we **do**’ [my emphasis]. M1 is also of the opinion that the ENP model mediates staff standards of practice. He notes that the TBS has become ‘the standard for the way they [staff] operate within the business and the way the business operates’. The reference to ‘operate’ in this comment further reinforces the view that the TBS is mediating new practices. These new practices do not just signify behavioural change but also a more cognitive and affective orientation to practice. As M1 suggests, staff ‘sense’ that Entente is part of Gunz practices and seem to be taking the ‘principles of Entente to heart’. M1’s comments on the affective aspects of Entente imply a deep level of staff engagement with the ENP model.

#### **5.5.4 An emerging nexus of trust practice**

Analysis of the data set for this study revealed that a group of practices that were new to Gunz were receiving a significant amount of staff support. By this is meant that the practices were either referred to in discussions or interviews, or observed in practice, providing evidence that staff were consciously engaging with them. This set of practices is best defined as an emerging ‘nexus of practice’ (Scollon & Scollon, 2007). It consisted of a number of different channels through which staff and management could provide input, or feedback about the TBS, to each other and through which company information could be shared. Included in this nexus of practices were: suggestion boxes in each department and canteen, a staff feedback email, regular randomised staff surveys, staff interviews, staff presentations and a staff newsletter.

Many of these feedback practices had evolved as a response to the trust survey through which staff and especially employees, had expressed their dissatisfaction with Gunz’s existing channels of communication. Implementation of these practices thus constituted evidence that Gunz was taking deliberative action to address this issue. One of the channels that was mentioned most in discussions and interviews with staff was the staff newsletter.

##### **5.5.4.1 Focus on the staff newsletter**

The newsletter was a direct and tangible outcome of the TBS. As MD writes in the first edition of the newsletter:

### **Extract: 5.8**

As you are all aware this publication owes its existence to the employee survey conducted by Entente. The feedback from the survey was that Gunz needed a publication that kept YOU informed as to what is happening throughout the organisation and it is sensational to see that request coming to fruition.

(‘The Big Bite’ Sept 08)

The newsletter, which was named by employees as ‘The Big Bite,’ is published monthly, produced in colour and includes photos of staff and the preceding month’s events. It begins with a message from MD, an update on the TBS and information about what has been happening in each business unit. The newsletter also includes information of a more personal nature. Each month it provides a profile of one of Gunz’s employees with information for the profile collected through regular interviews with staff members. The newsletter also includes contributions written by staff under the heading of ‘Good News Stories’ as well as news on staff birthdays, marriages, engagements and births.

The newsletter is circulated by email to all staff but is also available in hard copy in all staff canteens. Although it is collated by the HR department, it is an outcome of collaborative practice and relies for its continued existence on input from staff across Gunz. The newsletter’s main aim is to keep all staff informed about what is happening across Gunz but it also serves as a means of breaking down Gunz’s silos through ensuring equitable distribution of both organisational and personal knowledge. In this regard, it is a mediational means for increasing knowledge-based trust which, as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.2), arises as participants increasingly share the same knowledge base.

Kounalakis *et al* (1999) and Kastberg & Ditlevsen (2010) note that in-house newsletters have traditionally been a conduit for transferring managerial decisions to employees and so they are generally written from a managerial perspective. At Gunz there was a conscious move away from this orientation and the newsletter was set up to provide a forum through which organisational and social information could be shared. In practice, this meant that the newsletter was marked by hybridity and juxtaposed discourse coming from both ends of what has been described by Holmes (2005) as a workplace talk continuum.

Although based on workplace interaction, the workplace talk continuum provides a useful way of conceptualising the different types of discourse that were evident in the data set at Gunz. At one end of the continuum is task-based, or transactionally oriented talk and at the other end is socially oriented talk, or talk that is aimed at strengthening workplace relationships and

‘collegiality’ (Holmes, 2005). Gunz’s staff newsletter typically included discourse from both ends of this continuum.

The following extracts (5.9 and 5.10) were taken from the same edition of ‘The Big Bite’. Extract 5.9 appeared on the front page under the regular heading of ‘Entente’. The purpose of this regular entry was to provide staff with a monthly update on the ENP model and the progress of TBS as a whole. In contrast, Extract 5.9 appears on the back page of the newsletter under a heading ‘Births, Engagements and Marriages’. The placement of these articles typified the layout of ‘The Big Bite’ and illustrates that overall, transactionally oriented discourse remained dominant and ‘up front’ in this publication:

**Extract 5.9:**

**Entente**

We conducted a quarterly review of set KPIs for each business area around the 3 R’s in October. We now have a lot more transparency around key result areas for each business unit, with clearer reporting mechanisms available. This has allowed us to review all the Management teams’ position summaries and KPIs. As a result, the position summary review is under way, and will result in these KPIs becoming key drivers throughout the business (Dec 2008)

**Extract 5.10:**

**Births, Engagements and Marriages**

Ken has just proposed to his girlfriend in the most romantic way and she said YES! Ken managed to hide a puppy from his girlfriend and friends for a week before he popped the question.

One nervous evening Ken tied a diamond ring around the puppy’s collar and took his girlfriend on a picnic. After they arrived he said he needed to get something from his car where his parents were eagerly awaiting to hand over the puppy. On his return he presented it to Chrissie. The rest as they say in the movies is romantic history. (Dec 2008)

Concurrences of transactionally and socially oriented discourse were evident in all editions of The Big Bite. They serve several trust-related purposes. Their appearance in a freely available medium is evidence of the kind of open and transparent communication that is considered necessary for trust (see Chapter 2, section 2.8). Extracts 5.9 and 5.10 also provide evidence that the newsletter is encouraging the ‘delaying’ (Wilkinson, 1998) of Gunz, that is, providing information to all staff that would previously have been confined to other levels of Gunz’s hierarchy. To illustrate, Extract 5.9 is transmitting technical jargon taken from Gunz’s ‘stocks of professional interactional knowledge’. For example, the use of ‘manager speak’ such as KPIs, key result areas and key drivers are all examples of the type of discourse which would formerly have been restricted to manager level forums. The disclosure of this managerial

discourse to employees, grants them access to a world to which they previously had not been admitted, closes the 'information gap' (Carter & Grieco, 2001) between employees and managers and in a knowledge-sharing sense aligns them more closely.

From the management perspective, providing staff access to this type of organisational information is potentially risky, more so because it is written evidence against which staff may evaluate Gunz's future performance. Extract 5.9 is effectively making a promise to staff, who, as a consequence, will expect KPIs to be the 'key drivers' at Gunz. Divulging this information is therefore undertaken on the basis that Gunz's executive management trust staff not to take advantage of, or use it against them. In other words, this exchange of information is conducted on an assumption of goodwill trust (explained in Chapter 2, 2.6.2) being present in the executive manager-employee relationship.

The information in Extract 5.10 is also shared on the basis of trust. Extract 5.10 represents an example of 'backstage' discourse (Goffman, 1959) which is brought onto the 'front stage' by its publication in the newsletter. This kind of personal-disclosure would formerly have been consigned to private interpersonal interactions or remained as workplace gossip and would not have been considered an explicit part of the business discourse domain. The form of Extract 5.10 is also significant for trust in that it is a personal narrative. As with metaphor use, narrative discourse has been credited with an ability to mediate trusting relationships through providing insight into the experiential and affective side of organisations and their personnel (e.g. Holmes, 2005; Fina *et al*, 2006; Taylor *et al*, 2010). The relationship between narrative discourse and trust is explored in the third case study in this thesis, in Chapter 6.

The staff newsletter provided important insights into how Gunz staff was orienting to collaborative practice as mediated by the TBS. The inclusion of socially oriented information in the newsletter reinforces the family business and 'relational' aspects of Gunz's culture. Equally, the imparting of organisational knowledge to staff via the newsletter serves the management aim of introducing more commercial discipline across Gunz. Because the provision of this organisational information is in a form to which all members of staff are exposed, namely the newsletter, there is an underlying assumption that staff will read it. However, this assumption does not take into account the extent to which managerial information contained in the newsletter can actually be understood by employees, who have not had previous exposure to managerial 'stocks of professional knowledge' and who, therefore, may not be familiar with technical 'managerialist' terminology.

#### **5.5.4.2 Raising THE trust issue at Gunz**

The staff newsletter and other feedback forums that comprised Gunz's 'nexus of practice' served a crucial role in this research. It was as a result of examination of how elements of this nexus were actually being used by staff that HR and I were alerted to the existence of a major trust issue at Gunz. Although the practices that comprised this nexus provided all staff with a voice, in that they encouraged and indeed relied on staff input for their existence, we noted that, the more that the TBS became embedded at Gunz, the fewer the contributions to this nexus from the business unit managers.

We also began to note that the TBS, or rather the ENP model, was more frequently in use at the employee and executive management level than at the mid-line manager level. It was this observation that led us to more carefully investigate, through Gunz's normative practices of discussions and interviews with staff, their impressions of the TBS. The remainder of this case study, under the heading of participant perspective, focuses on our findings from this more focused investigation.

### **5.6 The participant perspective**

Participant interviews and discussions were crucial to not only providing insight into staff evaluation of the TBS but also for producing evidence of where trust existed at Gunz and where it was breaking down. The subsections of section 5.6 are organised to first provide a general overview of findings from analysis of participant interviews and then to discuss these findings in detail. Themes addressed in this section of the chapter examine participants' views of Gunz's organisational culture (section 5.6.2), the language of the TBS (section 5.6.3) and how the TBS was espoused (section 5.6.3.2) and enacted (section 5.6.4) both at Gunz and within the interviews themselves.

#### **5.6.1 Overview of general findings from participant interviews**

Overall the input from employees showed that employees had engaged extensively with the ENP model and they talked enthusiastically and fluently about it. Employees spoke about the TBS easily, at natural speed and so with few perceptible pauses, or displays of hesitancy and tentativeness. The interviews and data set as a whole also displayed a large number of incidences of employees using ENP terminology.

In contrast, executive and the mid-line managers generally displayed a negative stance towards the TBS and focussed on what was problematic rather than what was beneficial. Each manager voiced similar reservations about the TBS citing language, time and conceptual difficulty as barriers to changing their behaviour. In contrast to the employees, managers also displayed tentativeness and doubt in the interviews which manifested discursively in features such as pausing, hesitancy, lexical hedging and footing changes. Many of these features were also evident in the executive management interviews.

### **5.6.2 Participant views of Gunz Dental's culture**

It was when addressing their motivation for working at Gunz Dental that both the views of managers and employees were for the most part aligned. Frequent reference was made to the company's family friendly culture and to staff having a social rather than an instrumental motivation for working at Gunz Dental. The following are typical examples of such comments:

#### **Extract 5.11: Manager**

M1: There are a number of things that motivate me to work at Gunz.  
One I enjoy (.) I like the people that I work with I enjoy working with the MD.  
I suppose I enjoy the culture at Gunz there is a good friendly culture here

#### **Extract 5.12: Employee**

E1: I think Gunz Dental has been personally very good to me coming back from maternity leave (.) I respect the fact that they have done that for me I love the people here and enjoy coming for the social and using my brain.

#### **Extract 5.13: Employee**

E2: My first day at Gunz Dental was almost five years ago and I found it was the people the family culture. I have good relationships with all managers and employees which makes a difference.

Extracts 5.11-5.13 display a similarity of expression. Participants speak personally using 'I' and often choosing private verbs that have affective underpinnings, for example, 'I enjoy', 'I like' (M1) 'I love' (E1). Each participant cites 'people' as their main reason for working at Gunz and also emphasises the importance of interpersonal relationships using expressions like 'friendly culture' (M1) 'coming for the social' (E1) 'and having good relationships with all managers and employees' (E2). Managerial benevolence is also implied by E1 when she comments that 'Gunz Dental has been personally very good to me coming back from maternity leave'.

In spite of M1's slight hesitancy in his use of 'I suppose,' in Extract 5.11, these comments speak positively and enthusiastically about Gunz's culture, positioning it as a good place to work because of its social orientation. This provides support for the view that relationally based trust underpins many of Gunz's workplace practices.

### **5.6.3 Focus on the 'language' of the TBS**

Both managers and employees referred to the 'language' of the TBS in their interviews. For discourse analysts, the term 'language' has little meaning in this context and does not represent the coherent way of conceptualising and talking about this topic that the term 'discourse' does. However, as the term 'language' was used by participants to refer to the discourse of both the ENP model and Harts' strategy, I have selected to use the term 'language' throughout this discussion of findings.

The topic of TBS terminology and use of the term 'language' was not pre-empted or elicited by either myself, or HR, when conducting the interviews and it is consequently a topic of the participants' own choosing. This marked it as a significant theme for analysis.

Overall, managers spoke about struggling with 'the language' and Harts' concept of accountability and were clearly not fully engaging with the TBS. In contrast, employees spoke enthusiastically about the language. The views of managers thus stood in stark contrast to those of employees on this issue.

#### **5.6.3.1 Managers' perceptions of TBS language**

None of the managers used ENP terminology directly in their interviews but they did refer to 'Harts' language' and, in particular, made reference to 'accountability'. This served to highlight a problem with the TBS in that the duality of its approach required the mastering, by managers, of two languages, each of which framed a different approach to trust (see Table 5.2). Significantly, managers reported that when they had started to use Harts' language in the workplace, it was viewed by employees as coercive. As M1 comments:

**Extract 5.14:**

- M1      We started to use the [Harts] lingo and what people heard was the big stick so accountability was the big stick, I'm going to hold you accountable what does that mean? And that's what happened, So it re:ally sort of upset people and frightened them (.) plus I think we muddled up both for ourselves and for our people they both have to come together.

Extract 5.14 provides one of many example of a manager thinking aloud and somewhat tentatively about the TBS. M1's rhetorical question 'what does that mean?' suggests that accountability remains conceptually unclear both for him and for Gunz Dental's employees. His use of the pragmatic participles 'sort of' and 'I think' is further evidence of tentativeness, indexing uncertainty and perhaps anxiety. M1 also implies that the problem with the language is a result of managerial confusion, because 'we' (i.e. management) 'muddled up'. Interestingly, M1 concludes his comments less tentatively with the use of a declarative statement suggesting that the two strands of the TBS 'both have to come together' but, significantly, he does not suggest how this might occur.

M1's comments were reflected by other managers who also talked about the language of the TBS in terms of a 'challenge' and 'a difficulty'. Reflections were also made about the fact that the managers needed time to learn the language. The MD, for example, noted that 'having enough time to learn the language is an impediment'. Consequently, the language became categorised in many managerial discussions as an 'impediment' to progressing the TBS, a term which is notably taken from the terminology of Harts' strategy.

### **5.6.3.2 Employees' perceptions of TBS Language: espousing trust**

During the course of this study it became clear that it was the discourse of Entente's ENP model rather than Harts' language that was important to employees. They described it as 'great', 'effective', 'positive' and important for improving communications across the business. On closer analysis of their talk, this assessment appeared to be the result of employees feeling that the ENP model provided them with a tool through which they could voice concerns indirectly and in a non-threatening way. For example:

**Extract 5.15: Employee**

- E1:      I think the [ENP] language is crystal clear and the language actually helps us to talk with each other without becoming counteractive, confrontational and personal. I think the language is beneficial and we need the language because before we had a framework we were not talking about issues

Extract 5.15 provides a very positive evaluation of the ENP language defining it as ‘crystal clear’ and ‘beneficial’ and stating that it ‘actually helps’ employees to express themselves. E1 clearly sees the ENP language as an improvement for Gunz Dental and, in a reflection of the ENP model’s own terminology, stresses the ‘need for the language’. E1 also implies that the ENP is a tool for addressing issues that the company had previously avoided.

Also observable in the transcripts of the employee interviews, were incidences of actual use of ENP terminology. This revealed that employees were not having the same problems as management in appropriating and operationalising the TBS. For example:

#### **Extract 5.16: Employee**

E2: I have been made to feel that I can hold people accountable and it does not matter who you are talking to they are accountable for their actions. For example, I can feel comfortable going into the MD’s office and letting him know when I have a crack in my wall [someone has broken a promise]. So it is a sense of you can be honest and truthful and tell people how you feel and there is no ramification for doing so.

In Extract 5.16, E2 implies that the ENP model is taking away employees’ sense of vulnerability and providing them the confidence to express what they really feel. As discussed earlier, trust theory draws a clear link between risk and trust (e.g. Mayer *et al*, 1995; Rousseau *et al*, 1998) so that by defining the ENP model as a risk negating tool, E2 is drawing attention to its role in mediating trust. Also significant in Extract 5.16 is E2’s choice of, and stress on, MD in her example. This again implies strong support for the ENP model in that it provides employees with enough confidence to even let MD know when promises are unmet. This is an act that would no doubt be accompanied by the employee expectation that management would take action on the matter.

Although uptake of the ENP language is not in itself indicative of trust, its use is evidence of active engagement with the ENP model and so an example of ‘trust work’ in action. It is also worth noting that the use and repetition of the emotive verbs ‘feel’ and ‘sense’ in Extract 5.16 is evidence of the affective response to the model that was also alluded to by M1 in Extract 5.7.

Taken together the features highlighted in Extract 5.16 support the view that the ENP discourse is trusted by employees for providing them with a voice that they previously did not have at Gunz Dental.

#### 5.6.4 Enacted trust.

As the study progressed, it became clear that while employees continued to feel more empowered by the TBS, mid-line managers felt increasingly disempowered. As employees found a voice by using the ENP terminology to air their concerns, managers were, by comparison, losing their voice. The managers' frequent references to the difficulty of the TBS language (section 5.6.3.1) and the difficulty of conceptualising accountability were all, in hindsight, symptomatic of managers who were feeling disempowered by the TBS, and of a TBS which had provided the means for employees to air their perceptions of mid-line managers' inabilities. Although at the management level there continued to be a lot of talk about change, the change in managerial behaviour needed to support the TBS was lacking. The most telling comment in this regard came from FD who suggested that:

##### Extract 5.17: Executive Management

FD: We are very good at Gunz at talking the talk without actually introducing the actual physical behavioural changes that need to be aligned with saying the words to actually drive the physical change in the operations so there is a lot of talk about agreement and holding people accountable but when you actually ask how there is a lot of backing off.

The 'we' at the start of Extract 5.17 is a general reference to management. FD's marked repetition of 'actual' and its derivatives, his highlighting of 'physical' and 'lot' describes the major issue that Gunz was facing in driving the TBS down through the organisation. The apparent managerial unwillingness, or inability, to hold people accountable, or as the FD describes it 'a lot of backing off', highlights a conflict between espoused and experienced behaviour at Gunz (see Argyris, 1990). This was raised by both employees and managers as the main impediment to progressing the TBS at Gunz. As MD suggested:

##### Extract 5.18: Executive Management

MD: I think the issue is about how you manage the consequence of not keeping your promise what does that mean? from an organisational point of view we're still trying to understand what consequence is.

Extract 5.18 is another example of a manager thinking aloud. MD also noticeably poses an identical rhetorical question to that of M1 in Extract 5.14 with his 'what does that mean?' This reinforces the proposition that the Gunz management team did not, in fact, have much clarity about the TBS.

It is worth remembering that under family ownership, managerial benevolence had prevailed in cases where poor performance should have been more severely reprimanded and that there is little evidence that there had ever been support for a strong disciplinary procedure at Gunz. Consequently, management as a whole lacked the experience, the ability and even the will to address under-performance so that poor employee and poor managerial behaviour had both been habitually tolerated and even accommodated within the organisation.

Several references to ineffectual behaviour or inability were made, albeit indirectly, in the interviews. In the majority of cases, these references were to managerial rather than employee behaviour. Interviewees implied a general lack of managerial ability within the company to tackle the consequences of unmet expectations and/or promises. This is evidenced both by MD in Extract 5.18 and by E1 in both Extract 5.15 and in the following Extract 5.19:

**Extract 5.19: Employee**

E1: The whole issue that remains is the accountability. I think we know what we have to do and what we want to do I just don't think we know how... ..I think people don't see accountability happening I don't think some people think it is being taken seriously (...) perhaps the behaviour change of people being managed more effectively is not happening (.) or being displayed yet.

Significant in Extract 5.19 is E1's hesitant and tentative expression. In comparison to the rest of her interview, for example, Extracts 5.13 & 5.15, this lack of fluency and evidence of cognitive effort (McEvily *et al*, 2003) is extremely marked. There is frequent repetition of 'I think' as well as lexical hedging in 'perhaps' the latter of which follows a marked and unusually lengthy pause. Additionally, Extract 5.19 displays a negative orientation through repetition of 'don't' and the use of 'not'. E1's change of footing mid-speech is also evident. E1 initially starts in Extract 5.19 by aligning herself with the organisation through her use and repetition of inclusive 'we' but then shifts to the more distant people. This coincides with the point at which E1 is implying that the lack of accountability is an outcome of managerial inability 'the behaviour change of people being managed more effectively is not happening'. This suggests that E1 wishes to avoid criticising those with whom she otherwise claims to have a close relationship and who she has previously claimed, in Extract 5.12, to love: 'I love the people here'.

Extract 5.19 also provides support for Mayer *et al*'s (1995) model (section 5.1 and Chapter 2, 2.5). E1, having previously displayed an acknowledgement and appreciation of executive managerial benevolence in her statement that 'Gunz Dental has personally been very good to me coming back from maternity leave' (see Extract 5.12) does not have the same perception of managerial ability here in Extract 5.19.

The conclusion that one can draw from this is that a two-dimensional model of trust best describes Gunz's employee-manager relationships. In other words, although there is evidence that employees and their managers like each other as people and trust each other socially, this trust does not extend to employees trusting their managers' professional abilities to manage.

A further point worth making is that the TBS did not provide managers at Gunz with the tools for behavioural change. Although Harts' strategy focussed on improving managerial behaviour, when introduced to Gunz, it was in conflict with the ENP model and employees viewed it as a form of control, or a 'big stick'. The employees' perception of Harts' approach, together with managers' inability to conceptualise what 'accountability' really meant in practice, resulted in Harts' strand of the strategy only being adopted by the executive and senior managers. Further, the ENP model did not provide managers with the means to address the consequences of staff members who did not meet expectations or keep their promises.

Although the ENP model fulfilled its aims in terms of mediating communication about trust, it did not provide the tools to actively manage behavioural issues that were raised by staff. Since Harts' strategy, which was supposed to have provided managers with such tools, ultimately failed to be implemented across the organisation, the TBS, although effective in improving communicative behaviour across Gunz, failed to provide the means for behavioural change, especially at the management level.

## **5.7 Summary of study**

Through discursive analysis of social practices that were mediated by Gunz's trust strategy (TBS) and analysis of managers' and employees' 'orientations to the TBS, this case study has shown that organisational initiatives that specifically target the development of trust are far from straightforward. It is clear that for some sections of Gunz, and especially for employees, benefits did accrue from categorising trust in terms of a specific strategy and providing a specific, though artificially constructed, 'language' through which trust-related issues could be voiced. Additionally, the TBS effectively framed trust as an accepted and recognisable organisational practice by placing it on the organisational agenda and allowing trust to be a topic for open discussion in the workplace. However, by providing a terminology through which to address trust in the workplace, Gunz also inadvertently empowered staff, and particularly employees, to address distrust. This occurred because the ENP terminology provided a means through which employees could indirectly raise their views of managerial ability without fear of retribution, or loss of face, for either themselves or their managers. Implementation of the TBS at Gunz was, therefore, at the expense of illuminating a problem of

behavioural trust, in that, although relational trust was clearly present in manager-employee relationships and employees and managers clearly liked and trusted each other as people, this trust did not transfer to employees' trusting their managers' ability to 'manage'. Moreover, although the language of the ENP provided the means for managers to espouse trust, it did not provide them with the tools to enact it. Consequently, the main finding in this case pivots around the incongruence between managerial espousal and enactment of a targeted TBS.

The overall conclusion that one can draw from this finding is that strategies which target the development of trust will only be effective if the 'trust work', through which they are implemented, aligns talk about trust with explicitly reinforcing behaviours.

## **5.8 Implications**

The key contribution of this study is that it provides empirical evidence in support of a two-dimensional view of trust. The study demonstrates the complexity of organisation-based relationships that have a significant interpersonal element and shows that these relationships can be, and are, sustained by the co-existence of trust and distrust (Lewicki *et al*, 2006). This suggests that future studies of relational trust cannot be undertaken without a consideration of distrust as the two are inextricably linked.

Of the three studies in this thesis this study has the most to offer in terms of understanding how relational trust work can be most effectively researched. Findings in this study were the outcome of a lengthy period of research, over more than two and a half years, which facilitated access to a very large and rich collection of resources. The study was also facilitated by Gunz's interest in trust, its sense that its TBS was failing and its consequent willingness to take a collaborative approach to research. This is not to suggest that trust can, or should, be researched only in organisations that display an interest in trust. As case study 3 will demonstrate, it is equally important that trust research examine situations in which trust is neither explicitly addressed, nor a topic of conversation, but is nevertheless 'in play', if one is to provide a benchmark for the assessment of situations in which trust is explicitly addressed.

The strength of this present study is that it lends strong methodological support to the view that 'a comprehensive longitudinal case study design is the gold standard especially in workplace settings' (Stubbe, 2010, p. 212). Only through such studies are researchers likely to be able to provide situated 'thick descriptions' of workplace phenomena, such as trust, that are normally hidden from view. It is in the provision of such thickened descriptions that a research framework such as the MPF is also most applicable.

Workplaces are highly complex entities in which a single research approach would be unable to adequately account for the multiple communicative and behavioural phenomena that are at play in trust work. In this study it was relationships between Gunz's socio-historical practices, which were informed by its family business tradition, that were crucial to explaining the inability of its mid-line managers to manage and the resultant distrust that employees had in this aspect of their managers' work. Linguistic analysis alone would not have revealed this association which became evident only through the triangulation of data from institutional texts, participant narratives and observation over time of Gunz's changing culture and social practices.

The challenge for researchers is that the MPF approach requires time, commitment and resources as well as an organisation that is both willing and able to provide data and personnel to inform the research. Without such a commitment, however, trust research is likely to continue to be confined to the 'snapshot' approach to trust which, as discussed throughout this thesis, and specifically in chapter 2 (section 2.3) has so far produced results that are questionable in their practical applicability.

To take adequate account of the dynamic and multi-faceted nature of trust and meet the practical needs of workplace practitioners, this study has strongly supported the adoption of longitudinal workplace-based case studies of trust work which adopt the type of mixed methodological approach used here. It is only when a sufficient number of this type of study, such as this present study of Gunz, has been undertaken that, I believe, more generally applicable theories about trust-work and the role that discourse plays in this can really be developed.



## **Case study 3**

### **A case of established trust in community relations**

‘Here we drink three cups of tea to do business: the first you are a stranger, the second you become a friend and

**The third you join our family, and for our family we are prepared to do anything—even die’**

Mortensen & Relin (2006)

## Chapter 6

### 6.1 Overview of case study

Trust is at the heart of the relationship between organisations and their community stakeholders and underpins all forms of community engagement (henceforth CE). There is, however, very little research that examines this relationship in practice. This reflects the fact that Community Relations is still an emerging field of practice and is not easy to define. Community Relations remains unregulated and there are no formally recognised training requirements for its practitioners. Those who work with community stakeholders generally do so from '[a] personal orientation rather than one grounded in social research or theory' (Kemp, 2004, p. 9).

Community Relations work is consequently not always seen as 'professional' in the traditional sense (Kemp, 2004, p. 9) and the Community Relations function within organisations can be, and often is, low profile. This is reflected by the frequent location of its practitioners in other departments such as public relations (PR), external affairs, or marketing, a situation which probably accounts for CE being associated in the public arena with 'PR spin' (Kemp 2004, p. 9).

This notwithstanding, CE is an accepted area of organisational practice. It is most commonly undertaken to fulfil an organisation's CSR (corporate social responsibility) by ensuring that local communities have input into decisions that may directly affect their lives. The growth of CSR, and in turn CE, has meant that communities now expect to be consulted about organisational decisions and they expect their input to influence these decisions. Although still a predominantly voluntary practice, a lack of attention to CE can be risky for organisations. In a reflection of Beck *et al*'s (1994) theory of reflexive modernity (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.6), if communities feel they are not consulted, or their issues not addressed, they are likely to seek alternative means of redress such as the media or sub-political lobby groups. This reinforces the need for organisations to take steps to consciously develop trust with their community stakeholders.

A major issue for organisations is that CE differs significantly from other forms of organisation-stakeholder engagement because its participants are 'external stakeholders' (Jonker & Foster, 2002) who have no contractual obligation to the 'engaging organisation'. The basis of CE is therefore a 'social contract' and the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the practice relies on the ability of participants to build 'mutually beneficial' relationships (Zadek, 2004). These relationships are trust dependent and discursively mediated through a variety of social practices that comprise CE.

This case study investigates a case of established trust in the context of a relatively long-term relationship between a construction consortium and its community stakeholders. Specifically, it focuses on the face-to-face interactions of a community liaison group (henceforth CLG) that met regularly for four-and-a-half years to provide input into a large government-initiated and privately funded infrastructure project. The CLG in this study typified such groups and had a very diverse membership. This included: representatives of the construction consortium – Velcon (a pseudonym), local residents, representatives of local community groups such as bush care groups and local businesses, representatives of local and state governments, an independent facilitator and a minute taker. During its first eighteen months of meetings, the group experienced considerable conflict concerning: the design and construction of the project, the need for the community representatives to provide rapid comment on highly technical documents, the organisation of the CLG meetings and personality clashes. However, following this initial state of distrust, the group transformed into one in which participants, while representing diverse sets of interests, came to trust each other and to share close emotional bonds. The purpose of this study is to examine how this trust was accomplished and then to show how this trust was interactionally displayed by members in the CLG meetings.

The main focus of this study is a co-constructed narrative in the group's final meeting through which the CLG members reflect on their shared history and account for their close relationships. Although in the meeting data analysed for this study there is never explicit mention of trust, I will show how this narrative represents a form of trust work. In line with narrative discourse theory, the CLG narrative affords the group's members the opportunity to co-construct their experiences (de Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008), collaboratively reflect on and make sense of their experiences (Garfinkel, 1967; Giddens, 1991; Zimmerman & Boden, 1992; Czarniawska, 1998; Jones & Candlin, 2003; Taylor & White, 2000; Greenhalgh *et al*, 2005) and evaluate their experiences (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972). The narrative also serves to highlight particular social practices that have played a role in the development of members' trust.

Close linguistic and discursive analysis of the CLG narrative attests to the level of member agreement that has finally been reached by the group after much initial distrust and much acrimonious debate. This agreement is in itself indicative of group trust. More fascinating, however, is that this fine-grained analysis reveals a similarity in the discourse structure, linguistic features and semantic orientation that participants adopt and incrementally develop across the narratives' turns. This represents a form of what I will refer to as 'discursive mirroring'. It is this discursive mirroring that is the clearest interactional indicator of the level of relational trust achieved between CLG members.

The study begins by briefly defining and tracing the general evolution of CE and its role as an institutional process in infrastructure projects (6.2). This discussion highlights the main constraints and affordances that practices associated with this specialized form of CE have on trust. In section 6.3, I introduce Velcon and provide background information about the CLG and its participants (6.3.3). Analysis and discussion of findings is organised to mirror the trajectory through which trust developed in the CLG and is divided into different stages. Stage 1 discusses the group's initial state of distrust (6.4.1) while Stage 2 focuses on how particular practices were introduced to counter this distrust (6.4.2). Stage 3 analyses a series of consecutive turns taken from the CLG narrative to demonstrate how members co-construct the narrative through their discursive mirroring behaviour (6.4.5). In section 6.5, I consider the relevance to trust of selected features of the members' talk that recur across the entire narrative. This includes the CLG members' use of metaphor (6.5.1), humour and laughter (section 6.5.2), and membership categorisation (section 6.5.3). Section 6.7 summarises the main findings of the study and the chapter concludes (section 6.8) by addressing the study's limitations and implications for future research. The practical relevance of the study is discussed in Chapter 7.

The full transcript of the CLG narrative is included in Appendix 4 of this thesis.

## **6.2. A brief history of community engagement**

To the layperson the terms 'Community Engagement' (CE) and 'Public Participation' are often synonymous. However, practitioners who work with 'public' stakeholders see them as two distinct domains. Public participation was the forerunner to CE and first emerged in the U.S. in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It arose as the government response to civil protests by residents and environmentalists against 'undesirable' infrastructure development. Public participation was developed to provide citizens with a 'voice' at the approvals stage of government-funded and usually large-scale, infrastructure projects. From its inception, as Nelson & Pollack (1997) note, the public viewed this 'participation' with scepticism, labelling it as a form of governmental PR (public relations) through which governments sought public support for infrastructure projects that had already been endorsed. Public participation, as a consequence, quickly gained a reputation of privileging the regulator over the citizen, a reputation which continues to affect perceptions of CE today.

During the 1990s, the increasing emphasis on the role of organisations as corporate citizens, driven in large part by the redefinition of sustainable development and the emergence of CSR (see Chapter 4, section 4.2), resulted in a clearer differentiation of the terms 'public participation' and 'community engagement'. Public participation came to refer to participation

at a national or global level, usually between national or state government and the public. In contrast, community engagement came to define local forms of engagement usually between organisations and members of the communities in which they operate. A further difference in these two forms of participation also emerged as public participation became increasingly mediated through citizen organisations or institutional forums while CE focused more on engagement with individual citizens or local community groups.

The concept of ‘community’ is contestable yet is rarely interrogated in the organisational domain. Organisations primarily define ‘community’ by geographical location although, in practice, a stakeholder ‘community’ also incorporates ideological conceptions. CE exemplifies this through inclusion of groups who share sets of common values such as environmental groups, religious-based groups, or groups that represent ‘communities-of-interest’ such as ‘the business community’, or professional groupings (see Sennett, 1998; 2012 for more on this point).

The term ‘engagement’ is also contestable and premised on the development of long-term sustainable relationships between organisations and their communities in which power is shared and outcomes are mutually beneficial. Although ‘engagement’ is characterised by an orientation to ‘inclusivity’ and ‘participation’, it is the engaging organisation that makes decisions about who will participate in CE and how. This means that although CE practices are normally framed in ‘value-neutral stakeholder dialogue’, in reality, they are often exercises in organisational control (Conley, 2005). Accordingly, CE practices reflect organisational practice and are predominantly task oriented and limited in their ability to allow for the type of ‘social’ talk that is oriented towards fostering collegial relationships (Holmes, 2005). Community representative group meetings, for example, are typically constrained by a time limit, an agenda, the necessity of talking through a chair and their overall level of formality.

CE encompasses a wide range of practices. This includes the dissemination of information to members of a community, for example, through public exhibitions, mobile displays, letter box drops, or door knocking. Face-to-face meetings with the community are also a common feature of CE and may consist of small focus group discussions, large scale community meetings, or meetings with groups who represent different sections of a local community. The focus of this study is on a typical form of CE that is associated with large-scale government-funded infrastructure projects: the community representative group meeting.

### **6.2.1 Community liaison groups (CLGs) and trust**

CLGs (community liaison groups), or an equivalent acronym represent a specialised form of CE. In Australia, CLGs are formed to provide input into the design and construction phases of large-scale infrastructure projects which may be government or privately funded. CLGS differ from other bipartisan forms of CE, which consist solely of industry and community representation, in that they also incorporate government sector representation. This tripartite feature of CLGs makes their meetings a particularly complex ‘site of engagement’ (Goffman, 1963; Scollon, 2001) because there is a need to balance three broadly different sector perspectives. These perspectives can be defined as the regulatory (government), commercial (corporate) and social (community) perspective. The need to develop sustainable trust and ensure balance in CLGs has led to their meetings being facilitated by ‘independent community liaison representatives’ (ICLRs) which thereby adds a further perspective to explorations of trust in these groups.

The main role of community representation on CLGs is to provide community input into a project and to disseminate information about the project through the relevant communities. For community representatives, this entails reading and commenting on project documentation within a time frame set by the engaging organisation. Project documentation is usually lengthy and quite technical thus requiring both an intellectual capacity and a time commitment from the community representatives. The focus on project documentation in these groups typically raises tensions as the onus is on the engaging organisation to get community sign off for its plans while community members usually wish to discuss it in detail. This has implications for the extent to which trust can be developed in these groups and requires members to be adaptable in their approaches to the CLG role.

Most significant in relation to trust is the fact that community representation on CLGs is voluntary and usually long term. Community representatives are typically sought through self-nomination via newspaper advertisements. Membership is decided on the basis of where nominees live, how much they are likely to be impacted by a project, their community interests and whether or not they represent a ‘relevant’ community group. Community members are therefore selected in light of what is perceived to be their social group identity rather than as a result of their personal identity and are usually selected ‘sight unseen’. An assumption of trust underpins this process and results from the view that if community representatives are prepared to give up their time and volunteer for a ‘social’ cause they will operate within the CLG on the basis of goodwill trust, also referred to by Miranda & Klement (2009) as ‘intentionality’

(Chapter 2, section 2.6.2). This assumption often results in engaging organisations whose focus is the form of engagement rather than the relationships that underpin it.

In reality, CLGs are typically characterised by heterogeneity, by participants who are marked by difference rather than similarity, and who may operate from a personal rather than a group perspective. This heterogeneity and lack of cohesiveness can, and often does, hamper the progress of CE and the development of trust-based mutually beneficial relationships. The diversity of the CLG members' backgrounds and interests was, in this present study, a strong contributing factor to the CLG's initial period of distrust (see section 6.4).

### **6.3 Research site, data and participants**

The infrastructure project in this study was designed and built by a construction consortium referred to as Velcon. The project took five years to complete and was a D and C (design & construct) project. This meant that although the overall design of the project had been completed prior to construction, final tweaking of the design remained. The role of the community representatives on the CLG was to give input into this detailed final design phase and into the potential impacts of construction on the local community.

Velcon was, in my experience, unique in the approach that it took to Community Relations. Atypically for construction projects, Community Relations was represented at the senior management level of the consortium and the Community Relations team was unusually well resourced. The team consisted of ten staff, all of whom were experienced CE practitioners. This high level of resourcing was a consequence of the Project Director's belief that effective Community Relations is the key to the successful completion of infrastructure projects. The Community Relations team included: Sylvie, the community-relations team manager, Sam, Sylvie's second-in-command, and me, as one of five senior consultants. One of the team's main responsibilities was to oversee five CLGs that were spread across the geographical area of the project. I took responsibility for one of these CLGs, although not the one that participated in this study.

The CLG in this study was selected, as previously noted (Chapter 1, section 1.3), because it had evolved from a group in conflict to one whose participants exhibited group commitment and close trust-based relationships. This CLG met monthly, in a community church hall, for two hours and during its four-and-a-half year term held a total of fifty-four meetings. Meetings were attended by an average of fifteen participants, including six community representatives. Attendee numbers typically fluctuated according to the stage of construction which dictated

who from Velcon needed to attend the meeting. Regular Velcon attendees were Graham, the senior construction engineer for the CLG area and Sam, the Community Relations team member responsible for overseeing this group. Other members of Velcon's project staff were also called upon from time to time to give updates on specialised aspects of design and construction such as construction noise, or landscaping. Participants who made up the 'core' of the group, or who are referred to in this study, are listed below (6.3.1) with a brief description of their affiliations.

Although over the course of four-and-a-half years a very large data set was collected for this study (see Chapter 3, Table 3.2), the main data source comprises eight hours of audiotapes taken from the CLG's last four meetings, which I attended in person. I was unable to audiotape more than four meetings due to the time that it took to get ethics clearance from the government arm of the project to conduct this aspect of the research. Although, as a member of the Community Relations team, my name was familiar to the community representatives in this CLG prior to this research, I was otherwise unknown to them. In the meetings that I attended, my role was that of an observer. I never actively participated in the meetings apart from introducing this research in the first meeting that I attended and obtaining participants' signed consent to audiotape their meetings. I did however engage in small talk with participants both prior to and after the meetings and noted down pertinent comments from these conversations.

The audio taped data in this case study is supported by field notes and interactional data collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with Sylvie, the Community Relations team manager, informal discussions with colleagues in the Community relations team, Fran the CLG's facilitator and other Velcon staff. As a member of Velcon's staff, I also had free access to project documentation which I was given permission, by Velcon's Project Director, to use for this research.

### **6.3.1 Study participants**

All names used in this case study are pseudonyms.

#### **Project representatives:**

<b>Ivor:</b>	CEO of the operating company that takes over the running of the project on completion of construction. He is relatively new to the CLG.
<b>Sylvie:</b>	Velcon's Community Relations team manager.
<b>Sam:</b>	A senior member of Velcon's community team who deputises for Sylvie when necessary.
<b>Graham:</b>	Senior construction engineer for Velcon.

<b>Cath:</b>	State government representatives assigned to the CLG.
<b>Fran:</b>	Independent community liaison facilitator (ICLR). Fran replaced the group's first facilitator who resigned after eighteen months. She was with the group for a total of three years.
<b>Sally:</b>	Minute taker

#### **Community representatives:**

<b>Joy:</b>	Resident, representing an action group that lobbied for construction of the project for many years before it gained government approval. She had, by the time of this study, been accorded the status of spokesperson by the rest of the community participants in the CLG.
<b>Mary:</b>	Resident representing impacted local residents. She has been with the CLG since it started.
<b>Rob:</b>	Representative of a user's group. Rob has been with the CLG since it started.
<b>Brian:</b>	Representative of local businesses. Brian is a relatively new CLG member who replaced the outgoing local business representative. He had been with the CLG just over a year at the start of data collection.

## **6.4 Moving from distrust to trust, discussion and findings**

Analysis and discussion of findings is divided into three stages to broadly reflect the trajectory that trust took in this CLG. Stage 1 examines the group's initial period of distrust (6.4.1) and Stage 2 (6.4.2) discusses particular CLG practices that played a part in enabling trust (6.4.2). Stage 3 (6.4.3) analyses and discusses a series of consecutive turns taken from the group's final meeting to show how the CLG members discursively co-construct the CLG narrative as well as discussing the relevance of this to displaying members' relational trust.

### **6.4.1 Stage 1: Distrust**

The group's first eighteen months of meetings were marked by conflict. This arose from power struggles and differences of opinion between the community representatives and the government and project representatives about project design, the scope of engagement and the role of regulators as well as from personality clashes. This initial period was made more difficult due to the pressures of construction deadlines and the need for the community members to quickly review and comment on plans to minimise the project's community and environmental impacts. Requests to extend the review period could not be met and the CLG meetings became a forum for the community representatives to vent their frustrations. Sylvie, the Community Relations Manager, defined the group at this time as 'antagonistic'. She

qualified this with accounts of ‘table thumping events’ characterised by overt displays of anger or tears and even accusations of lying. Relationships were extremely strained during this time and there was little trust evident in the group’s meetings. This view is later borne out by participants who refer to this period metaphorically as one of ‘surviving’ (see Extracts 6.4 and 6.5). The climax came 18 months into the project when the facilitator resigned. A new facilitator, Fran, was appointed and it was this that was the catalyst for change in the group.

On arrival, Fran spoke individually to each member of the CLG. As there was little contact between project and community representatives between meetings, this was atypical. The purpose of these interactions was to provide Fran with the opportunity to develop relationships with the members and to establish what may have led to the group’s difficulties. These interactions were significant in representing the first opportunity that members had to reflect on and evaluate their CLG experience up to this point. According to Fran, members were very eager to talk and many spoke to her at great length. In summarising these interactions to the group in its final meeting, Fran suggested that:

**Extract 6.1:**

**Turn 26: Fran**

...it was my view that the group had got stuck there when I first came to the group. That you’d got stuck in that place and you didn’t have any tools or processes to go forward. everybody said exactly the same things to me from a:ll sides of the table and I think that (.) certainly my experience is when I fed that back to everyone there was a collective ‘ah ha’ and a real collective (.h) ‘you know, we agree we don’t want it like this so’ and I think from that moment forward people did make a commitment to do things differently and it made a difference.

In Extract 6. 1, Fran provides her evaluation of the situation in which she found the CLG. She noticeably stresses through her emphasis on ‘everybody’ and ‘a:ll’ that, in spite of their differences, there was in reality agreement and an alignment of views amongst the CLG members. Fran suggests that once she fed this information back to the members, they ‘made a commitment to do things differently’. This was a critical moment in the group’s history and might be defined as the initiation of trust in the CLG. Significantly, trust starts to develop as a result of this conscious decision to focus on maintaining group relationships (see also Extract 6. 5).

In Extract 6.1, Fran chooses the metaphor of a journey to describe the engagement process. She compares the group’s difficulties to breaking down and not being able to move forward ‘you’d got stuck in that place and you didn’t have any tools or processes to go forward’. Metaphor use such as this is often a significant indicator of a speaker’s attitudes and emotions (Cameron &

Masden, 2009; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and can provide a window on facets of an individual which are normally hidden from view. Here Fran's employment of the *JOURNEY* metaphor allows her to refer to an emotive situation in a sensitive way and also displays her care and concern for the group. The *JOURNEY* metaphor is one of several, evident in the data, which is used by members to evaluate their CLG experience (see also section 6.4.3). Their shared use in this study is significant in displaying emotional alignments and in displaying group membership. The members' use of selected and co-constructed metaphors and the link between these and trust is discussed later in this case study, sections 6.5.1-6.5.3.

### **Stage 6.4.2: Stage 2: Enabling trust through social practice**

Following Fran's discussions with CLG members, the CLG reoriented its engagement practices to better reflect the collective group stance. One example was the introduction of site visits in lieu of some of the CLG meetings. Site visits consisted of members either walking, or being bussed, along sections of the construction site. From the institutional perspective the organisation of such visits was far from straightforward. Members attending visits had to be inducted into health and safety procedures and often had to wear PPE (personal protective equipment). However, the outcome was the inclusion of community members in the 'construction' world, sharing what had previously been domain-specific construction discourse.

Also significant was the 'live' minute procedure. Although the intention has always been to review and sign off minutes in the meetings, the facilitator prior to Fran had not made this a priority. Fran, however, ensured that minutes were reviewed and signed off by all members in the meeting. This was very important for developing trust in the group. As Sylvie comments:

#### **Extract 6.2: Sylvie**

In the early days of the meetings the review of the minutes took nearly as long as the meetings. Although the live minutes were torture and pedantic for a long time they were the single most important strategy for achieving trust in the group. The process of agreeing and committing to paper was overt and not the result of backroom discussions...the shared power of the minutes was the result of a discourse about what went into the minutes and this was a learnt skill which was a jointly learned.

The 'live' minutes represented an opportunity for negotiation and collaboration on a task that had a tangible outcome. The minutes were a crucial document for the CLG. They were publicly available on the project's website and so represented a window on the CLG to the outside world. It was clear in the meetings that I attended that the CLG members took the task of discussing the minutes very seriously and felt that they were jointly accountable for ensuring

their comprehensibility outside of the meeting room. Although it often took an inordinate amount of time in the meetings, the review of minutes was seen as crucial and the task was undertaken with great precision and commitment by all CLG members. The empowerment of members through these social practices represented an orientation to partnership that had previously been missing from the group.

A further mode of enabling trust was through the attendance at the CLG meetings of senior project staff. This is atypical of infrastructure projects as it is both a time and financial commitment for the construction company. Cath, one of the State government representatives for the CLG notes that:

**Extract 6.3. Cath**

there's been times when this (.) when at this meeting we've had er (.) six or seven members of your senior management team present at the meeting which has been almost unprecedented and um I think that input has really assisted in resolving issues very quickly and getting responses back to the community members and to you Fran on time (.).

Cath's comment in Extract 6.3 provides evidence of the values-based approach that Velcon took to its Community Relations work. Resourcing CLGs with senior project representatives is uncommon, or as Cath emphatically suggests 'almost unprecedented' but is a demonstration of respect for the community representatives as well as of commitment to the CLG engagement process. The CLG's community members had the contact details of senior Velcon staff and were able to contact them directly between meetings. The commitment of time and resources to the CLG by senior representatives of Velcon was one of a number of practices that helped to strengthen relationships between Velcon staff and the community members of the CLG.

A further practice that was held to have been trust enabling was a social meeting of CLG members around Christmas, shortly after Fran's arrival in the group. As Sylvie recalled:

**Extract 6.4: Sylvie**

A few of the community representatives and project representatives decided to meet in the pub. This also helped because the community members suddenly saw us [project representatives] as like them (.) you know as wives with husbands and mothers with children and this made a big difference.

In this social meeting context, CLG members were able to present their individual, personal identities to each other in a way that had not previously been possible in the context of the CLG meetings. Following this social meeting, members were able to draw on both their personal and social identities in subsequent interactions with each other. This was evidenced in the increase

in small talk that was evident in phone calls between community CLG members and project staff between CLG meetings. I also noted that small talk both prior to, and after, the CLG meetings, often centred on personal topics such as holidays, health and families. This small talk served to strengthen interpersonal relationships between CLG members by allowing for socially rather than task-oriented conversations.

### **6.4.3 Stage 3: Experienced Trust**

The outcome of the group's decision to take a consensual approach to the CLG was that members established trust. This trust was most evident in a co-constructed narrative section of the group's final meeting in which the members reflected on the history of the CLG and their relationships. This narrative was significant because it represented the first time that the participants had the opportunity to talk 'on record' about their shared experiences and relationships. It also became a means of uncovering the social and emotional dimensions of the CLG.

The CLG narrative was selected following analysis of transcriptions of all four CLG meetings. This particular narrative episode encompassed linguistic and discursive features that had been evident in the other three CLG meetings and also illuminated practices that the CLG members held responsible for the development of their close relationships. The CLG narrative therefore represented a microcosm of the CLG engagement process and a culmination of linguistic and discursive features that had been present in the other three CLG meetings that I had attended.

#### **6.4.3.1 The significance of CLG narrative to trust**

A direct link has been made in organisational research between the use of narrative and the development of organisation-stakeholder trust (see Jameson 2001; Allan Frame & Turney, 2005). In the organisational domain, trust is held to be a potential outcome of a person's ability, often someone in a managerial position, to use narrative to 'tell a good story'. This is a communicatively uni-directional and monologic view of narrative which, nonetheless, holds narrative to be effective for building bridges between corporate and non-corporate audiences or for explaining organisational complexity and abstract constructs to the lay person (e.g. Clark, 1972; Mitroff & Kilmann, 1975; Meyer, 1995; Taylor *et al*, 2011). Problematic with this view is that it portrays narrative, especially when delivered by management, as underpinned by strategic intent.

The CLG narrative in this present study is not strategic but is rather a co-constructed section of the CLG meeting that unfolds spontaneously. As such it is more aligned with Coates (1996) Labov & Waletzky's (1967) Wenger's (1998) and Johnson's (2008) conception of narrative as a dynamic feature of discourse that is employed in interactional situations to co-create parties' locally shared histories. Used in this context, narratives can also act as a 'sense making' phenomenon (see Czarniawska, 1998; Laslett, 1999; Jones & Candlin, 2003) being both reflective and reflexive (Taylor & White, 2000); that is, as participants collectively replay particular moments in time, their tellings of a situation become an indexical feature of the interpretive process through which they construct their identities, hold people accountable for their actions (Hall *et al*, 1997) or take stock of their attitudes and feelings. The CLG narrative represents the first time that the CLG members openly, in the context of the CLG meeting, addressed and reflexively 'make sense' of their relationships. The CLG narrative was, in reality, a defining moment for the group, through which they were able to jointly affirm their views of the group's shared history.

The CLG narrative took place 1 hour 27 minutes into the group's final meeting and ran for approximately twenty minutes. The full transcript of the CLG narrative is provided in Appendix 4 of this thesis. Extracts taken from the narrative are referred to by their turn number. The first extracts from the narrative to be discussed in this study represent a series of consecutive turns. Taken together they illustrate how the narrative is co-constructed by members and how particular discursive features such as humour and metaphor are taken up and extended across members' turns. This is representative not merely of a 'shared repertoire' (Sarangi & Candlin, 2011) but also of participants' cognitive and affective alignments. They evidence mutually held interpretations of participants' shared history and are a significant indicator of trust in the CLG. Most significantly the narrative is characterised by 'discursive mirroring' behaviour (see 6.4.3.3). Crucial in terms of trust, however, is not that discursive mirroring occurs, but that similar cognitive and affective factors underpin it.

Prior to analysis and discussion of the discursive features that comprise 'discursive mirroring', I explain how this term is being used in this study.

#### **6.4.3.2 Discursive Mirroring**

The term 'mirroring' is commonly associated with psychiatry and especially psychotherapy where it is mainly used to define how eye gaze and/or body language is taken up and 'mirrored'

by participants in various interactional contexts (e.g. Maddux *et al*, 2008; Van Swol, 2003). Perhaps the most familiar application of the term ‘mirroring’ is in the context of the job interview where training in interview technique suggests that ‘mirroring’ the body language of one’s interviewer increases the chances of being offered the job (Morris, 1994).

Limited research has been undertaken into mirroring as socio-linguistic behaviour and what is available has mainly focused on how lexical mirroring is used to ensure particular meeting outcomes. Weingart *et al* (2007) examine the construction of shared agreements in meetings and note that participants consciously coordinate their language to achieve this shared outcome. Curhan & Pentland (2007), whose study focuses on the strategies of professional negotiators in negotiation meetings, find that the negotiators make deliberate lexical choices to ‘mirror’ their co-participants and that these choices support the successful accomplishment of meeting outcomes. However, in both Weingart *et al* (2001) and Curhan & Pentland’s (2007) studies, lexical mirroring is a strategic choice and not an instinctive behaviour.

The CLG narrative supports a different understanding of mirroring which defines it not as an outcome of strategic intent but rather as an outcome of participants who have formed a close bond. This is similar to Huffaker *et al*’s (2008) study which examines how negotiators form coalitions in multi-party negotiation meetings. Although Huffaker *et al*’s study is experimental, and uses student participants, their findings show that mirroring behaviour is not necessarily a strategic choice but is rather motivated by affect. The study focuses on the students’ use of similar language, backchannel communication and turn-taking cues and finds that:

Linguistic strategies that mirror the lexicon of negotiation partners are prevalent in final coalition agreements, suggesting again that people like to share resources with those they feel a similarity or kinship to. While previous work has demonstrated the tendency to converge, entrain or mirror the lexical choices of dialogue partners, this study provides evidence for the potential *outcomes* of linguistic similarity: it fosters unity

(Huffaker *et al*, 2008, p. 17)

Analysis of the CLG narrative, in part, reflects Huffaker *et al*’s (2008) findings by demonstrating that the outcome of a shared repertoire, or discursive mirroring, is unity, which in this case study is equated to trust. However, the discursive mirroring behaviour in the CLG study is not simply a way of cultivating ‘unity’, or trust, rather it is indicative of trust that already exists between participants.

#### **6.4.4 Categorising selected text as narrative**

There are several reasons for categorizing the selected text as a narrative. The narrative has a distinct beginning and end within the context of the meeting. Its overall structure conforms to Labov & Waletzky's (1967) and Labov's (1972) narrative evaluation model and includes an abstract, orientation, complication(s), evaluation(s), a result and a coda. These terms are defined in Table 6.1 with short examples taken from the CLG narrative to support these definitions.

The narrative also shares many of the features of workplace narratives as defined by Holmes (2005). It concerns personal experience, includes implicit or explicit evaluation, is not a required accounting in the context of the meeting, and is not institutionally ratified 'core' business talk (Holmes, 2005, p. 675). The talk in this narrative is also characteristically different from the group's normalised meeting talk and is socially rather than transactionally oriented (Holmes, 2005).

Turns in the CLG narrative are delivered at natural speed with few perceptible pauses. Where pausing might occur, it is generally filled with discourse markers such as 'um' or 'er'. Turn taking is infrequent with the greater part of the narrative consisting of five long 'monologic' turns. These turns proceed with few interruptions and those interruptions which do occur are short and supportive of the speaker. They consist in the main of agreement tokens such as 'hear hear', 'yes', or 'oh yes thanks' and so signify alignment with the speaker. Also evident are interjections of humour and these display members' emotional attachments. The CLG narrative is characterised overall by frequent humour and punctuated by joint laughter. This is clear in the transcript of the narrative in Appendix 4 in which general laughter, because it momentarily stopped the meeting, has been assigned its own turn.

**Table 6.1 CLG co-constructed narrative: conformity to classic model of narrative structure (Labov & Waletzky, 1967, Labov 1997)**

Narrative stages	External and/or embedded evaluation	Gloss	Related CLG component	Supporting examples from data
<b>Abstract</b> (Ivor)	Personal: statement of purpose.	Introduction to narrative.	To express appreciation and thanks.	Turn 1, Ivor: ‘the <u>main</u> reason I came down here was to thank the community representatives’.
<b>Orientation</b> (Ivor)	Personal: expression of gratitude.  + personal, affective recapitulation.	Provides background information required to ensure listener’s comprehension.	Not detailed as the narrative refers to shared CLG experience which the members are already aware of.	Turn 3, Ivor does remind the CLG that they have been meeting for the last ‘fo:ur years’ and that they ‘ <u>read all</u> the stuff’.
<b>Complication<sup>1</sup></b> <b>(Summary)</b> (Joy)	Personal: affective recapitulation  + negative evaluation of complication.	Turning points or crises in the story; what happened and what happened next.  May, as here, include evaluation of the complication.	Participants refer to the critically difficult period pre-Fran but also to challenges throughout the CLG process.	Turn 16, Joy: ‘we suffered <u>terribly</u> before you arrived’.
<b>Complication<sup>2</sup></b> <b>(Extended)</b> (Fran)	Impersonal: objective recapitulation  + positive evaluation.	Evaluation is usually linked to the complication and its relevance.	CLG members present their position(s) with regards to the CLG engagement process and each other.  The group evaluates the CLG challenges they faced as extremely difficult.  They evaluate each other’s input into the CLG as fully committed.	Turn 26, Fran:  ‘there have been times when the meetings have been tense and challenging but I think that everybody’s put their investment into maintaining a relationship um (.)so that not only the project can move forward but also the issues can move forward and er that’s commendable’.  Turn 26: Fran  ‘People did make a commitment to do things differently and it made a difference’.
<b>Evaluation</b>	Both personal and impersonal.	Evaluation of the CLG members and the engagement	CLG members evaluate the outcome of the CLG	Turn 3, Ivor: ‘I know that you <u>read all</u> the stuff and some of it I’ve seen and I (.) I think the fact

	evaluation is presented in the CLG narrative as is positive and negative evaluations.	process.	as successful because of the commitment to the group relationship.	that you've <u>read</u> it is a remarkable thing so I congratulate you on that'.  Turn 24, Fran: 'Well certainly um for me it's been it's been fantastic'  Turn 50, Brian: 'this is this is a model for making a better outcome it sounds like it this um despite the pain'.
<b>Result + positive evaluation</b> (Mary)	Personal: affective summary	What finally happened.	The CLG is defined as successful.	Turn 51, Mary: '...that's why this particular community liaison group has worked'.
<b>Coda</b> (Fran)	Impersonal turn to business matters	Finishes the narrative and returns listener to the present.	Fran draws the narrative to an end.	Turn 67, Fran: 'Now um I'm just aware of the time and, and I think that I would like to um do the construction update'.

#### 6.4.5 Analysis of CLG narrative consecutive turns.

Several extracts that typify the discursive features of the narrative have been selected for initial comparison. These extracts represent consecutive turns and, taken together, illustrate how the narrative is co-constructed by members and how particular discursive features are taken up and extended across turns.

##### Extract 6.5 Joy

13. Joy: ... and I would like to thank Fran  
14. All: [hear, hear]  
15. Fran: [oh thank] you  
16. Joy: because we suffered te:rri:ribly before you arrived =  
17. Fran: = ((laughing)) then a little bit more when I did arrive (Fran laughs again)=  
18. Joy: = **NO** that's actually not a joke we suffered te:rri:ribly and when you arrived we thought we might suffer a bit more but we all learned, you learned and we a:ll, we learned and I think I speak for all of us a:ll of us and we a:ll have great respect for you and the way that you have conducted these meetings (.) we some of us haven't always agreed [with you]  
19. Fran: [is that ri:ght?] I hadn't noticed  
20. All: ((general laughter))  
21. Joy: but (.) but we have al:ways respected what you've done and I think that you deserve our thanks.  
22. Fran: ah thank you =  
23. Joy: = you have e:arned every bit and respect is something that you have to earn and you have earned e:very bit.

Extract 6.5 represents the latter part of Joy's 'monologic' turn. Prior to this, she has been thanking Ivor for his contribution and commitment to the CLG (transcript omitted). In Extract 6.5, she turns her attention to Fran. Joy displays a strong emotional response to her memories of the time prior to Fran's arrival through her emphasis on 'te:rri:ribly' and her repetition of we 'suffered te:rri:ribly' (turns 16 and 18). This, together with her emphatic **NO** and the quick brushing away of Fran's attempt at humour in turn 18, which noticeably overlaps with turn 17, suggests that Joy is determined to make her point clear and stress how difficult the pre-Fran period was the group. Her use of inclusive 'we' throughout Extract 6.4 and her emphasis on all in turn 18, which remains unchallenged by the community representatives, suggests that the group agrees with Joy's evaluation of this time.

In turn 18, Joy echoes Sylvie's evaluation of the minutes (Extract 6.2) by suggesting that the resolution of the crisis was the outcome of a collaborative learning process. She includes all CLG members in this process: 'we all learnt, you learnt and we a:ll, we learned'. Significantly, Joy feels confident enough to speak on Fran's behalf, 'you learnt', suggesting that the group identifies with Fran and understands that the engagement process was a professional learning

curve for her (turn 6). This indicates empathy and is evidence of the close bond that has developed between Fran and the community representatives.

This close bond is further emphasised in the short exchange that ensues between turns 18 and 20. Joy implies in turn 18 that the community representatives have been challenging: ‘we some of us haven’t always agreed [with you]’. Fran quickly counters this with her retort: ‘[is that ri:ght?]’ (turn 19). This could be interpreted as sarcastic, as evidenced by her lengthening of the vowel sound in ‘ri:ght’, her rising intonation, as well as by her subsequent ironic comment ‘I hadn’t noticed’ (turn 19). The joint laughter that this invokes supports Fran’s observation and shows that the community representatives do not take offence.

In turn 21, Joy regains the floor to conclude her thanks to Fran. She employs the *BANKING* metaphor ‘earned’ (see section 6.5.1) and repetition of this term to highlight Fran’s commitment to the ICLR role. This, plus her repetition of the term ‘respect’, which has been described by some trust theorists as a synonym of trust (e.g. Blomqvist, 1997; Bhattacharya *et al*, 1998), together with her emphasis on the words ‘all’ (turn 18) ‘a:lways’ (turn 21) and ‘e:very’ (turn 23) leads us to the conclusion that the group has come to very much trust in Fran’s ability to facilitate the CLG.

Together with these linguistic markers of trust, there are other indicators of trust in Extract 6.5. Joy structures her turn in a way that conforms to Labov & Waletzky (1967) and Labov’s (1972) narrative evaluation model as previously presented in Table 6.1. She includes a ‘complication’ (her reference to the pre-Fran period in turns 16 & 18), an ‘evaluation’ (the collaborative learning process in turn 18) and ‘a result’ (the consequent group respect for Fran turns 21 & 23). This structure is repeated across all five of the longer narrative turns suggesting a form of discursive alignment.

Several metaphors which are introduced by Joy in Extract 6.5 are taken up in subsequent turns (see also Extract 6.6). The *BANKING* metaphor, signified by Joy’s use of ‘earned’, is used by members to address the theme of commitment. Joy’s use of the word ‘survival’ is a metaphor of war (turns 16, 18) and is related in Extract 6.5 to surviving the crisis that arose prior to Fran’s arrival. This metaphor is employed by Fran in the following extract (6.5) as well as by the other community representatives, with the exception of Mary, to refer to various challenges that the group faced. Its use is emotive and allows members to distance themselves from experiences which they clearly found difficult.

### Extract 6.6 Fran

24. Fran: well certainly for me it's been fantastic (.) I mean there have been times when I have been thinking I need to be air-lifted out of here
25. All: ((general laughter))
26. Fran: you know on some, on some set of challenging evenings when um you know I had to sort of move into the strict mode um but I think that, that even at those times I think the group has found a way to move forward
- ... ..
- I mean you know there have been times when the meetings have been tense and challenging but I think that everybody's put their investment into maintaining a relationship um (.) so that not only the project can move forward but also the issues can move forward and er that's commendable. I mean I remain in awe of each of the community members' commitment um you know the fact that Mary gets out there and walks these things and can talk in such detail um the Banksia um the sh- you know the biting Banksia
27. All: ((general laughter))
28. Fran: um the, you know um a number of things. I mean Joy's grasp of all the numbers and the history and Rob and you know the sort of the (.) um the creative abrasion that has existed between the pedestrians and the cyclists and the motorists
29. All: ((general laughter))

In Extract 6.6, Fran starts by defining her CLG experience as positive through her use of the superlative 'fantastic' in turn 24. In contrast, her subsequent comment takes up the metaphor of war from Extract 6.5 and infers that the group has been challenging and that 'there have been times when I have been thinking I need to be air-lifted out of here' (turn 24). This combination of the war metaphor with humour is significant and becomes its normative use in subsequent turns (e.g. Extract 6.7). The comment provokes general and loud laughter (turn 25) presumably because the members can empathise with Fran's sentiments.

In turn 26, Fran moves to a more serious footing to present a professionally oriented assessment of the CLG engagement process. Employing the *JOURNEY* metaphor again (see Extract 6.1), she praises the group for finding a way to 'move forward' and credits this to the group's 'investment' (turn 26) in maintaining the group relationship. Notably, this use of the *BANKING* metaphor is not linked to Fran's commitment, as it was in Extract 6.3, but rather to CLG members' commitment.

In concluding Extract 6.6, Fran reciprocates the respect that Joy conferred on her (Extract 6.5) with her comment that she remains 'in awe of each of the community members' commitment' (turn 26). 'A:we' is notably lengthened to emphasise Fran's respect for the community representatives. This sentiment is further reiterated in her subsequent listing of members. She

names each community representative and ascribes a unique characteristic to each of them. These characteristics are chosen to reflect each member's 'signature' issue and the CLG members' recognition of this accounts for their subsequent laughter in turns 27 and 29. This humour and laughter is internal 'in group' humour and can really only be appreciated by the CLG members. The use of this personally directed humour provides evidence of the close personal relationships that Fran has been able to forge with the community members.

### **Extract 6.7 Rob**

30. Fran: and there are some wonderful s- wonderful moments that sometimes  
you, you think if (.) o:nly I could've captured that um but =
31. Rob: = I'm s:o pleased I've survived =
32. All: ((general loud laughter))
33. Fran: = you've gone grey =
34. All: ((general laughter))
35. Sam: = I was just going to say you look a lot better mate =
36. All: ((general laughter))
37. Sam: = you look a lot more relaxed

The series of overlapping turns in Extract 6.6 provides a succinct example of co-constructed humour in the CLG. Invoking the metaphor of war again and stressing his pleasure, 'I'm s:o pleased I've survived =' (turn 31), Rob too aligns with the view that the CLG has been challenging. This comment provokes laughter, which is quickly interrupted by Fran's humorous comment in turn 33 that Rob has gone grey, and followed equally quickly by Sam's comment in turn 35 that Rob looks 'a lot better mate'. This extract, which is indicative of the kind of personal banter that might take place between good friends, is the most obvious display of interpersonal trust in the group. The comment on Rob's personal appearance is a 'backstage' observation (Goffman, 1959) which is brought front stage by Fran and is on display to the whole CLG. Importantly, the observation goes unchallenged by Rob or anyone else in the group so that the joint laughter which ensues suggests that the group and Rob himself share in it. Without close trusting relationships in the group, personally directed 'on record' observations such as this one, and Fran's comments to members in Extract 6.5 (turns 26, 28) could be seen as inflammatory and even offensive. They are therefore a significant indicator of interpersonal trust in the CLG.

## 6.5 Trust indicators in the CLG narrative

Section 6.4 has demonstrated through close analysis of consecutive turns in the CLG narrative how the CLG members discursively co-construct their experience. These turns have displayed a marked similarity in the linguistic choices and semantic orientation that the speakers make. In the following sections of this study, I discuss features of the members' discourse that are germane to displaying trust across the whole narrative (see Appendix 4). Sections 6.5.1- 6.5.4 examine members' co-construction of metaphor, sections 6.5.2 and 6.5.2.2 examine incidences of humour and laughter, while section 6.5.3 discusses the significance to trust of the members' categorisation of themselves as a 'group'.

### 6.5.1 Metaphor as an indicator of trust in the CLG narrative

Metaphors are common in narratives and in this context are often used as a linguistic device 'for seeing something in terms of something else' (Burke, 1945, p. 503). In this traditional definition, metaphors are identified by the presence in texts of lexical items that are incongruous within their context of use (Cameron, 2003) i.e. linguistic metaphors. The application of metaphor to organisations was formerly dominated by the work of Morgan (1986) who implied that metaphor was 'a way of thinking' and 'a way of seeing' (1986, p. 12) based on a comparison of two discrete domains which are then presented as somehow similar. Although Morgan's view of metaphor orients towards Burke's (1945) more traditional and rather static understanding of metaphor, it is Morgan who has been commonly held responsible for associating the concept of metaphor with the organisational domain. Milne *et al's* (2006) more recent study of metaphor use in organisations reports that its use, in this context, is frequently characterised by transferring information from a relatively familiar domain to a new and relatively unknown domain (see also Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Vosniadou & Ortony, 1989) hence its frequent use in discourses of sustainability. A number of metaphors have become specifically associated with organisational and management theory. The *JOURNEY*<sup>2</sup> metaphor, for example, which is also prevalent in the CLG narrative (see section 6.5.1.1) is held to be central to providing accounts of organisational and management change (Hammer & Champy, 1993).

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<sup>2</sup> Conceptual metaphors are conventionally written in SMALL CAPITALS as a way of distinguishing them from other forms of metaphor, e.g. linguistic metaphor. Larger groupings of metaphor found in discourse data are labelled using *SMALL CAPITALS AND ITALICS* so as to emphasise a contrast with those conceptual metaphors that are held to pre-exist in the discourse (See Cameron, 2009, p.18). In discussing metaphor in this case study, I have adopted Cameron's conventions.

A consideration of how metaphor use might relate to organisational practice has emphasised the intimate connection between metaphor and its various context(s) of use. This orientation is increasingly prevalent in organisational metaphor studies which have evolved from identification of individual metaphors, to a consideration of how metaphor functions as a form of social and discursive practice (e.g. Grant & Osrick, 1996; Osrick *et al* 2002). Related to this, is also a consideration of how metaphor is strategically used by institutions or professionals at particular moments in time to provoke a particular course of action (see Fairclough, 1992, 1993; Grant & Osrick, 1996; Myers & Macnaughten, 1998; Crichton, 2010).

The shift in contemporary metaphor studies to focus on conceptual over linguistic metaphors has been attributed to Lakoff & Johnson (1980). Lakoff and Johnson defined metaphor as not merely a figurative mode of speech (a linguistic metaphor) but rather as an essential constituent of participants' language and thought; a means of linking two different conceptual systems. Further, Lakoff & Johnson (1980) saw the ubiquity of metaphor in everyday language as not simply a means of conceptualising the world but as rather structuring human experience. Metaphor, typically characterised by its linguistic economy, is thus seen as a substitute for much deeper levels of conceptual knowledge and thought (see also Tsoukas, 1993). Although there is debate about the adequacy of conceptual metaphor theory (e.g. Cameron, 2007), it has proved to be a 'source of inspiration' (Cameron & Masden, 2009, p. 2) to studies that examine metaphor in use as a form of social interaction.

It is conceptual metaphor as a dynamic form of social interaction that is highlighted in this study. This orientation is informed by Cameron's wide body of work which characterises metaphor in terms of discursive action (e.g. Cameron, 2003; 2008; 2009). Cameron has examined how metaphors operate dynamically and display multiple interconnected dimensions which can be linguistic, cognitive, affective, physical and cultural. This dynamic view of metaphor is also intimately linked to a consideration of its contexts and the availability of metaphors to be extended and transformed over time by its users. In this sense, metaphor is not 'owned' by an individual but is rather 'inter-individual': belonging to both speaker and listener (Cameron & Stelma, 2004).

The affective dimension of metaphor is especially significant in this study. Cameron notes how metaphors often carry evaluations, attitudes, values, perspectives, or beliefs (2009, p. 3). When metaphor use is considered across stretches of social interaction, it therefore has the potential to tell us something about the speakers' attitudes and emotions. As Cameron & Masden note:

Metaphor is an important way of using language; people use metaphor in explaining ideas or to find indirect but powerful ways of conveying feelings and emotions. By investigating people's use of metaphors, we can better understand their emotions, attitudes and conceptualisations, as individuals and as participants in social life. Metaphor thus offers a tool that researchers across applied linguistics, social sciences and the humanities can use to reveal more about how people think and feel.

(Cameron & Masden, 2009, p. i)

The claim that metaphor provides a way of understanding how people think and feel makes it central to a study of trust. As a significant mode of explaining, emoting and conveying feelings, metaphor is intrinsically linked to the cognitive and affective sub-factors that are held to underpin relational trust (Lewicki *et al*, 2006). Analysis of metaphor is thus potentially a means of revealing such facets of a relationship and so of indicating interpersonal trust.

In relation to the affective dimension of metaphor, Cameron has investigated how metaphors may be used over time by 'sub-groups' in society to establish their own 'in-group language' and identity (Cameron, 2003, p. 24). Charteris-Black (2003) and Littlemore (2003) also demonstrate how metaphors are culturally loaded so that their meanings can only be understood by those with shared knowledge or experience. This cultural dimension of metaphor and its effectiveness in establishing a collaboratively held 'in-group' identity is also a significant aspect of the CLG members' use of metaphor in this study.

Cameron & Stelma (2004) point out that metaphors are often 'clustered' in encounters and are unequally distributed across participants' speech. This clustering is particularly evident at critical moments and may display a speaker's level of stress. Metaphor may therefore have a diagnostic role to play, for example, in psychotherapy or counselling, where its presence may signal the state of mind of a client. Analysis of such clustering might also provide a diagnostic mirror through which participants can view themselves and their own relationships (Cameron & Stelma, 2004). Metaphor clustering is a feature of the CLG narrative and serves to illustrate the trust-based nature of the CLG members' relationships.

#### **6.5.1.1 The *JOURNEY* metaphor in the CLG narrative**

The *JOURNEY* metaphor is the most commonly used metaphor in the CLG narrative. It is also one of the most frequent to be found in organisational discourse where, as Milne *et al* (2006) note, it is used to define processes that are not universally accepted or whose outcome remains unknown. The *JOURNEY* metaphor is commonly used in promoting organisational change and has specifically been linked to discourses of CSR and sustainability which, in common with CE,

are not as yet universally accepted or clearly defined processes (Milne *et al*, 2006). The *JOURNEY* metaphor is also used in organisations to denote progress or moving forward which is its main application in the CLG narrative.

Table 6.2 notes all the incidences of the *JOURNEY* metaphor in the CLG narrative. The relevant metaphorical lexis is bolded for ease of reference.

**Table 6.2: Incidences of the *JOURNEY* metaphor in CLG narrative**

Turn	Speaker	Metaphor: journey
26	Fran	...on some set of challenging evenings when um you know I had to sort of move into strict mode um but I think that that even (.) at those times I think the group has found <b>a way to move forward</b> ...
26a	Fran to group	I'm a great believer that um you mustn't be afraid of a bit of conflict or, or of tension but having a way to work through it and <b>move forward</b> is what counts
26b Fran to group	Fran to group	It was my view that the group had <b>got stuck</b> there when I first came to the group. That you'd got stuck in that place and you didn't have any tools (.h) or processes to <b>go forward</b>
26c Fran to group	Fran to group	so that not only the project can <b>move forward</b> but also the issues can move forward
38	Fran general comment	a number of people <b>peeled off</b> , as they always do
44	Fran to Sally	... ..you've(.) <b>guided us</b> with those minutes in a um wonderful way
46	Cath to Fran	you've kept us on time and to the point and <b>moved us along</b>
46a	Cath to Fran	you've really been able to resolve and er <b>move things forward</b>
52	Mary to Fran	The meetings have been meetings of activists without passive riders without blocking outists and (.h) in large part it has been due to <u>you</u> Fran <b>moving things along</b>
52a	Mary to Velcon staff and Ivor	We could see Velcon was going to was capable of doing this [the project]and we wanted to s- <b>walk beside them</b> and um help it and then along came you Ivor helping us to um (.) <b>take the next step</b>
67	Fran	Cos if you hold a position that that's all it will ever be and it <b>won't go anywhere</b>

Use of the *JOURNEY* metaphor is significant for mirroring the trajectory of trust in the CLG group. Its main use is to refer to the CLG's ability to progress and move forward as a group (e.g. 26, 26a, 46, 52a) something which, in their first 18 months of meetings, they had not been able to do. Additionally, the *JOURNEY* metaphor allows challenges in the group's engagement process to be addressed in a non-threatening way and without apportioning blame. For example, Fran refers to the CLG's difficulties as '*getting stuck*' (turn 26b) thereby likening them to a vehicle breakdown. She notes that, at the time of this breakdown, the issue for the group was that it lacked 'any tools or processes to *go forward*'.

The *JOURNEY* metaphor is also used to define the engagement process as a group, rather than as an individual, endeavour. In turn 26, Fran credits the group with progressing the engagement process, 'I think the group has found *a way to move forward*'. This is in contrast to Mary and Cath's use where the *JOURNEY* metaphor is applied individually to Fran. Cath suggesting in turns 46, that Fran has 'kept us on time and to the point and *moved us along*' whilst Mary comments that 'it has been due to you Fran *moving things along*' (turn 52). Mary and Cath's usage of this metaphor is significant because it is Fran's job, as facilitator of the CLG, to continually move the group forward and to progress issues that arise in their meetings. In applying the *JOURNEY* metaphor to Fran, Cath and Mary are providing a positive evaluation of Fran's professional role, as facilitator of the group.

Mary in turn 52a employs a more emotive use of the *JOURNEY* metaphor. Here she reiterates that the community members had from the outset wanted a collaborative process 'we wanted to *walk beside them* [Velcon]'. She also suggests in her use of 'Ivor helping us to um (.) *take the next step*' that the journey has been incremental.

Mary's use of the *JOURNEY* metaphor in turn 52a highlights the potential for there to have been a 'power play' in the group. Mary comments on how the community members categorised Velcon as 'capable' of building the infrastructure project. Selection of the winning bid in the tender process associated with the project was, in this case study, clearly not the remit of the community. However, in turn 52a, Mary is perhaps reminding the CLG that if the community had not approved of Velcon, the community representatives might, in line with Beck (1994; 1999) (section 4.2.6) have made life more difficult for Velcon.

Overall, the *JOURNEY* metaphor serves to remind the group of their ability, as a group, to progress and move forward. It is this incremental development, to which the *JOURNEY* metaphor refers, that is tantamount to reflecting the development of the group's relationships and thus their mutually developed trust.

### 6.5.1.2 The *BANKING* Metaphor in the CLG narrative

Research into metaphor use in organisations has noted how the *JOURNEY* metaphor is specifically used to refer to the development of trust in organisational relationships. When used, the *JOURNEY* metaphor emphasises how, in organisational relationships, trust is ‘banked’ over time and available for use in times of conflict (see Plowman *et al*, 2001). The ‘*BANKING TRUST*’ metaphor is also referred to by Covey as being a necessity for one’s ‘emotional’ bank account (Covey, 2004).

**Table 6.3 Incidences of the *BANKING* metaphor in the CLG narrative**

Turn	Speaker	Metaphor
1	Ivor to community representatives	you have comments and you feed them in here and <i>invest</i> huge amounts of time and you <i>invest</i> huge amounts of emotional energy
23	Joy to Fran	You have <i>earned</i> every bit and respect is something that you have to <i>earn</i> and you have <i>earned</i> every bit
26	Fran to group	I mean you know there have been times when the meetings have been tense and challenging but I think that everybody’s put their <i>investment</i> into maintaining a relationship um
39	Fran to Velcon	they [Velcon] have <i>invested</i> the time in terms of responses

The use of the *BANKING* metaphor in the CLG narrative provides insight into members’ orientation to the CLG engagement process and to each other. The reference to ‘*investing*’ reflects the long-term nature of the engagement process on the Velcon project and its consequent need for commitment. It also implies that the outcome of investment is reward, in that one invests in anticipation of good returns.

By allowing for comment on the commitment of the CLG members to the engagement process, the *BANKING* metaphor is also indirectly referring to the CLG members’ relationships with each other. As discussed throughout this research, the attainment of mutually beneficial relationships relies, according to Hardin (2006) and Lindberg (2000) on parties being both committed to the relationship and willing to maintain it. In light of this, Fran’s use of the *BANKING* metaphor in turn 26 is particularly significant. Here Fran uses the *BANKING* metaphor to comment on members’ orientation to their relationships: ‘...I think that everybody’s put their *investment* into maintaining a relationship’. The emphasis here on *investing* in maintaining a relationship

supports the finding that the members have committed to, and consequently developed, mutually beneficial trust-based relationships.

### **6.5.1.3 The *WAR* Metaphor in the CLG narrative**

Similar to the *JOURNEY* metaphor, the *WAR* metaphor has been directly associated with organisational discourses. According to Clancy (1999), *WAR* metaphors are most often invoked in CEO speeches when leaders are attempting to rally staff to attain particular organisational goals. Their use is, as O'Connor (1995) notes, more prevalent in times of potential economic difficulty when the *WAR* metaphor is typically used as a *WAR* cry to stir staff into metaphorical battle.

The *WAR* metaphor has been categorised, as such, in this study because of its collocation with lexical items that imply pain and suffering and also because, from the analyst's perspective, I was aware of the group's prior history of conflict. The use of the *WAR* metaphor in the CLG is in stark contrast to that of the *JOURNEY* and *BANKING* metaphor, both of which had positive connotations. Clearly the *WAR* metaphor does not connote happy times but is used, in this CLG group, as a means of indirectly addressing periods of conflict in the CLG history.

The *WAR* metaphor is the most significant of the metaphors used by the CLG group because of the light that it is able to shed on the group's relationship. It is employed by members of the CLG over a series of turns to refer to and reflect on, their shared periods of conflict.

Significantly, there had been no prior discussion, or even mention, of these challenging periods in the CLG meetings and so members' use of the *WAR* metaphor in this context potentially holds therapeutic value. Notably, all of the community members, with the exception of Mary, use the *WAR* metaphor, as does Fran. Velcon representatives do not directly use the *WAR* metaphor although Sam is involved in the jocular discussion that is provoked (turn 35) following Rob's use of the metaphor in turn 31. This was previously discussed as Extract 6.7.

The fact that the use of the *WAR* metaphor is predominantly by the community representatives and Fran is significant. Following its initial period of distrust, the future of the CLG arguably pivoted around Fran's ability to bring the CLG, which was on the point of being disbanded, back together. Clearly the time prior to and directly following Fran's arrival in the group was especially challenging for both Fran and the community members hence their employment of the war metaphor (Table 6.3 turns 18 and 26).

The use of the *WAR* metaphor is emotive and allows the CLG members to distance themselves from experiences which they clearly found difficult. Most significantly, the *WAR* metaphor is

internal to the group. Although the lexico-grammatical features of the *WAR* metaphor can be universally understood by anyone reading the transcript of the CLG meeting, the contextual and emotive aspects which are invoked by its use are only able to be genuinely felt by the CLG members who lived through and experienced the difficulties to which it is referring. The *WAR* metaphor thus represents ‘in-group’ language and its co-construction across turns serves to display a similar semantic orientation by members to the challenges that they have faced together.

**Table 6.4: Incidences of the *WAR* Metaphor in the CLG narrative**

Turn	Speaker	Addressee	Metaphor use
6	Joy	Ivor	you have um withstood <i>the slings and arrows</i> that have been fired at you from us
16	Joy	Fran	because we <i>suffered terribly</i> before you arrived
18	Joy	Fran	No that’s actually not a joke we <i>suffered terribly</i> and when you arrived we thought we might <i>suffer</i> a bit more
24	Fran	Group	there have been times when I have been thinking I need to be <i>air-lifted out</i> of here
31	Rob	Group	I’m so pleased <i>I’ve survived</i>
50	Brian	Group	this is a model for making a better outcome it sounds like it this um despite <i>the pain</i> .

The *WAR* metaphor is initiated by Joy in turn 6 where its use is atypical to its use in the other narrative turns. Here Joy’s reference is to Shakespeare’s Hamlet and to the classic metaphor of ‘the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’. Joy’s initiation of the metaphor reflects a maturing of the group and implies that the CLG’s community members have come to a realisation that they may have had a negative effect on project personnel and have not always been easy to deal with. This view is reiterated by Joy in turn 13 when she addresses Fran.

A further effect of the *WAR* metaphor is to link the group’s past with its present, providing a sense-making opportunity for the group through which its members can ‘observe’ how they have evolved into a cohesive group that can now laugh at itself. The use of the *WAR* metaphor effectively binds the CLG members together and categorises them not just as a ‘group’ but as one that has survived conflict and emerged intact. The fact that the group has, in Rob’s terms, ‘survived’ (turn 31) allows the *WAR* metaphor to be used for a form of black humour. The use

of the *WAR* metaphor for this and other types of humour is discussed in subsequent sections of this study (section 6.5.2) but is its typical use throughout the narrative.

### **6.5.2 Relationship between humour and laughter and trust**

Humour and laughter are closely related and their presence in interaction is emotionally loaded. Because of its association with emotion, humour and laughter have most often been researched in the context of social relationships rather than in organisation-stakeholder relationships. Kangasharju & Nikko (2009) note that the traditional characterisation of organisations as impersonal and rational entities has left considerations of the emotional behaviour of organisations on the periphery of organisational research. Further, organisational researchers and practitioners have traditionally regarded emotion and in particular humour as ‘the antithesis of rationality’ (Kangasharju & Nikko, 2009, p.101) thus avoiding research into its potentially positive effects in organisations.

A further issue with researching the emotional dimensions of organisations, and specifically workplace humour is, as Ashforth & Humphrey (1995) note, that organisations are unable to communicate emotionally and in fact often lack the vocabulary to do so. Despite this traditionally negative stance towards emotion and humour research in organisations, a growing number of humour studies are demonstrating the significant role that humour can play in the workplace and specifically in the development of workplace relationships (e.g. Kangasharju & Nikko, 2009; Holmes, 2006; Adelsward & Öberg, 1998).

Recent studies of humour in the workplace have provided insight into how humour contributes to: teambuilding and the creation of positive group dynamics (Caudron, 1992; Morreall, 1991), feelings of group solidarity (Meyer, 2000), congeniality (Holmes, 2006), the shaping of workplace culture (Holmes & Marra, 2002) and reaching consensus and creating rapport (Adelswärd & Öberg, 1998). Many of these studies move closer to developing a relational perspective on humour, however, there remains a tendency in organisationally based humour studies to examine what provokes humour and laughter rather than examining the potential for the presence of humour and laughter to indicate the status of workplace relationships.

Exceptions are sociolinguistic studies of humour in the workplace by Holmes (2000a; 2002; 2007) and Holmes & Marra (2002) which examine how different types of humour are discursively constructed and the potential effects of this on workplace relationships. Through analysis of spoken interaction in the workplace, they examine how workplace humour serves to sustain mutual relationships, display membership, shape insider knowledge and enhance

collaborative workplace behaviour (Holmes & Marra, 2002, p. 1686). The overall finding of many of these studies is that humour provides ‘an ideal vehicle for collaborative verbal behaviour’ (Holmes & Marra, 2002, p. 1688) and that participants in workplace settings often do ‘collegiality through humour’ (see Holmes, 2000a; Holmes *et al*, 2001; Holmes & Marra, 2002). Although findings such as these provide a useful basis for interpreting the discursive features of various types of humour, the orientation to humour in this present study is somewhat different. The emphasis in this study is on humour as a potential indicator of trust rather than on the role of humour in constructing relationships. In this respect, the study comes closest to that of Schnurr & Mak (2009) whose study examines the potential for humour to indicate different stages of workplace socialisation.

Humour and laughter are generally linked in research with laughter being explained as the outcome of one of three main theories of humour (see Greatbatch & Clark, 2003; Haakana 1999). The first, superiority theory of humour, is where participants are laughing **at** someone. Next, the incongruity theory of humour describes humour and its ensuing laughter as related to surprise following something that is perceived to be inappropriate or absurd in its particular context of use. Finally, the relief theory of humour holds that, laughter plays a therapeutic role in relieving stress or tension (see also Kangasharju & Nikko, 2009). In this present study, the relief theory of humour comes closest to explaining the association between the *WAR* metaphor and the recurrent laughter in the CLG narrative. However, the humour in the CLG narrative is based on more than relief that the engagement process has come to an end; rather, the type of humour and laughter in the CLG narrative displays close affectively based ties between the CLG participants.

#### **6.5.2.1 Humour and Laughter as an indicator of relational trust in the CLG**

Humour and laughter are prominent throughout the CLG narrative. Its occurrence is spontaneous and results from a discourse environment in which participants have grown close enough that issues of face (Goffman, 1959) are no longer a consideration in the participants’ relationships. This is evidenced by participants who do not hesitate to use personally directed humour.

Significantly, humour is initiated by participants from each sector of the CLG group: Ivor and Sam representing Velcon, Fran representing the government institution, and Brian and Rob the community. Also crucial in indicating trust, is not that humour is present in the CLG, but rather that it is picked up, understood and appreciated by everyone in the group. Each incidence of humour in the CLG narrative is followed by general and typically lengthy laughter thus

demonstrating that the humour is shared rather than unilateral. The CLG participants are, therefore, not laughing at, but rather with each other and thereby signalling that they have established interpersonal trust.

Trust is also implied in the topic choice for humour which is predominately associated with the *WAR* metaphor and its references to the group's challenges, periods of conflict and episodes of personal stress. The employment of a *WAR* metaphor for humorous purposes is only possible because the CLG members are all aware that they have overcome their difficulties and, as Rob states in turn 31, 'survived'. If the group had not overcome their conflicts, the use of the *WAR* metaphor would not generate the type of laughter that it does here.

Previous examples of humour and laughter connected to the *WAR* metaphor were highlighted during discussion of Extract 6.6 turns 24-29 and Extract 6.7, turns 30-37. A further example of the use of the *WAR* metaphor for humour is generated by Brian in Extract 6.8, turn 50:

**Extract 6.8 Brian**

50. Brian: when you are doing a job and er you want to get stuck into it and you've got to come along here and er this is, this is a model for making a better outcome it sounds like it this um despite the pain.
51. All: ((general laughter))

It is through the reference to 'pain', in turn 50, that Brian invokes the *WAR* metaphor. Once again, group laughter follows this collocation as it has in all previous turns that referenced the *WAR* metaphor (e.g. turns 26, 32 and 51). This laughter suggests that the humour in these turns is therapeutic, or relief affect humour. Haakana's (1999) conversation analytic study of laughter finds, however, that relief humour is typically followed by individual rather than group laughter. Clearly, this is not the case in this CLG and the atypical group laughter signals that participants hold the same attitudes and feelings towards their past conflicts and are able to empathise with each other's feelings in this regard. This empathy is evidenced by the shared laughter which, in itself, provides evidence of group relationships that are based on affective ties.

Another type of humour that is evident in the CLG narrative is personally directed humour in which the CLG members themselves become the objects of humour. Previous examples of personally directed humour have been discussed (see Extracts 6.5 and 6.6) but a further example of this type of humour comes from Ivor in Extract 6.8. Just prior to Extract 6.9, Ivor

has been thanking the community members for their commitment to the CLG engagement process. Joy had interjected to thank Ivor but in Extract 6.9 Ivor takes the floor again:

### Extract 6.9

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 7. Ivor | = have you read my little letter, I've written to you [all?]   |
| 8. Joy  | [oh?]  |
| 9. Ivor | and what I say here is ((reading from letter)) these final works are near completion there'll only be limited means of c- community consultation so don't hesitate to ring <u>me</u> . [I may not answer the phone]= |
| 10. Joy | [Thank you, well we have]  |
| 11. All | ((general laughter))   |

Ivor is responsible for introducing humour into the CLG narrative. His jocular comment in turn 9 implies that the community members have not been easy to deal with, a theme which is reiterated by the members themselves in, for example, Extract 6.5 and Extract 6.6. Ivor's comment that he 'may not answer the phone' (turn 9) might in other circumstances be offensive but here it is taken in good faith and incites general laughter from the group (turn 11). This laughter signifies that Ivor, in spite of his relatively short time with the group, has already established a close enough relationship with the community members to be able to poke fun at them. The significance to displaying trust of this personally directed type of humour is that it does not cause affront.

In each case, personally directed humour is created from the group's shared repertoire and stocks of interactional knowledge that have been built up between them over their four-and-a-half years. The exposure of aspects of the members' personality to the group is not taken as offensive because the members have come to know each other well enough to be able to predict how each member operates in the context of the CLG group. This is tantamount to the stronger forms of trust discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.2) such as IBT (identification-based trust). Humour in this CLG is thus based on 'insider knowledge' and would not be comprehensible to anyone who does not have personal experience of the CLG members and the group's history. As such, the humour in the CLG narrative also serves to reinforce the 'group' categorisation that is discussed in the following section of this study (6.5.3).

### 6.5.3 Membership Categorisation as an indicator of relational trust

Sacks (1974), who pioneered work into categorisation, theorised that linguistic devices which he called 'membership categorisation devices', or MCDs, are used in everyday interaction to

classify different social groupings. This view was later extended to include objects and to examine the ways in which categorisations are applied and by whom (Sarangi & Candlin, 2003). Hall *et al* define categorisation as ‘a set of processes which result in facts, opinions, or circumstances being established as one type of category rather than another’ (Hall *et al*, 1997, p. 93). This definition has been applied to studies in medical and social work domains which investigate the ways in which professions and institutions classify aspects of their work so as to strategically ensure outcomes such as professional ownership, or exclusion of lay people (Hall *et al*. 1997; Sarangi & Candlin, 2003). In other words, categorisation can be, and often is, used strategically in organisational contexts.

The significance of analysing MCDs in a study of trust is that they have the potential to reveal alignments. Especially relevant in this study, is the categorisation of the CLG members as a ‘group’. The term ‘group’ was externally applied to the CLG at the outset of the organisation-stakeholder engagement process. Although this ‘group’ categorisation is a common sense usage of the term, it is value laden and assumes coherence and collaboration. For the first 18 months of operations, the ‘group’ categorisation of the CLG in this study was very much a misnomer as the ‘group’ had clearly, as Sylvie suggests in Extract 6.2, operated as such in name only. More information to support this claim is provided in sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2. Of relevance to assigning a categorisation of trust on the CLG is, therefore, the ways in which, during the CLG meetings, the members categorise themselves as a group. It is important to note that, as with the ‘group’ categorisation, the practices and purpose of the CLG were prescribed by Velcon at the start of the engagement process and were not an outcome of member negotiation. In the initial stages of CLG engagement, there were clearly conflicting member expectations in terms of the CLG’s purpose and its potential outcomes. Tension was evident in the early days of CLG engagement between the linguistic categorisation of the CLG as a ‘group’ and the members’ social practice as a group. For trust to develop, these two aspects need to be aligned so that espousal of group membership is mirrored by enactment of group membership. Only when this occurs can the MCD of ‘group’ be potentially predicative of trust.

#### **6.5.3.1 Membership categorisation as displaying trust in the CLG narrative**

Significant in relation to displaying CLG trust is not that the members categorise themselves as a ‘group’ but rather how they substantiate this. It is through the explanations that members provide when referencing the term ‘group’ that trust becomes most evident. Participants initially joined the CLG with a range of different agendas, values, beliefs and cultural backgrounds. Yet, at the conclusion of the CLG, it is clear that members share the ‘group’

categorisation as evidenced, in part, by the lack of challenge to this term but more significantly by the pride that members display in the CLG group's accomplishments.

In Extract 6.10 turns 57-59, Joy provides a description of one of the ways in which she feels the CLG has become a group. Mary's unequivocal accord in turn 58 reinforces Joy's opinion:

#### **Extract 6.10**

57. Joy: in those early days, that first two years we spent (.) more time  
in meeting outside =
58. Mary: = oh definitely =
59. Joy: = than we spent here and I think, think that, that's why we  
were able to be A community liaison GRO:UP instead of a  
disparate group of people.

Extract 6.10 reflects the commitment that the community members made to the CLG engagement process. In Extract 6.10, we learn that the community members frequently met together between CLG meetings to collate the pertinent issues and points that they wished to raise in the CLG meetings. In turn 59, Joy's emphatic reference to the GRO:UP clearly signals the importance that members placed on operating cohesively. This is reinforced by Joy's reference to 'disparate group of people' which suggests that members were aware of the challenges of CLGs that do not operate collaboratively. It is worth remembering that this CLG did, in fact, operate as a 'disparate group of people' at the start of engagement and, from Velcon's perspective, members did not cohere as a group until after Fran's arrival. In Extract 6.10, Joy is claiming that the community members worked collaboratively well before Fran joined the group, a point which is also reiterated by Mary in turn 52. However, even if this was the case, there were clearly issues in the whole group that prevented it from operating cohesively, in the earlier stages of the CLG engagement process.

A further substantiation of the link between the group categorisation and trust can be found in the members' descriptions of the group as one that has worked well. For example, in Extract 6.8 turn 50, Brian suggests that the engagement process has been 'a model for making a better outcome'. Mary in turn 52, reinforces this point:

#### **Extract 6.11**

##### **Turn 52: Mary**

so it really has been one of those fine experiences of (.h) activists all together and I'm sure that that's why this parti:cular community liaison group has worked

It is interesting that in Extract 6.11 Mary, in validating the characterisation of being ‘community liaison **group**’ to the CLG, reaches outside of the immediate experience of the CLG to her own experience of similar groups. Her reference to ‘one of those fine experiences of (.h) activists all together’ suggests that this is not her first experience of community or group engagement. Indeed, both Mary and Joy are experienced community activists who had both had considerable experience of community representative committees prior to the Velcon project. This is evident in Mary’s subsequent comment that this ‘parti:cular community liaison group has worked’. Her lengthening of the vowel in ‘parti:cular’ suggests that her previous experiences with groups of this kind had not always been quite so successful. This reference to past, less successful community engagement experiences, reinforces the positive outcomes that she claims of this CLG.

In Extract 6.12, Fran also confers the MCD ‘group’ on the CLG:

**Extract 6.12**  
**Turn 67: Fran**

because it’s all about the ability to collaborate and also to (.) try to hold an open mind even though you might have a position and to try to collaborate around interests and and you know common outcomes um (.) er cos if you hold a position that’s all it will ever be and it won’t go anywhere and er I think that um I think the fact that you really did have a mutual purpose, a common goal that that really enabled this group to actually achieve what it has achieved.

In Extract 6.12, which is part of the closing turn of the CLG narrative, Fran presents a more impersonal evaluation of the group. She does so from the professional perspective of the CLG facilitator. There seems to be two reasons for Fran’s choice of register in Extract 6.12. Firstly, she wants to move the meeting on to its next agenda item as it is, at this point, in danger of running over time. It is also likely that Fran wishes to close down Joy’s previous comment in turn 66, which was tending towards a general speech about how community members should be selected for CLGs. Secondly, Fran, in turn 67, is consolidating and ratifying the positive evaluations that the group members have been expressing through their summative recollections of the CLG experience. In doing so, she adopts the stance of an experienced facilitator of such groups and so reinforces both a general view about the potential ineffective operation of CLGs: ‘if you hold a position that’s all it will ever be and it won’t go anywhere’ and a targeted view about the effectiveness of this CLG: ‘I think the fact that you really did have a mutual purpose, a common goal that that really enabled this group to actually achieve what it has achieved’. In this final speech of the CLG narrative, it is Fran who provides ultimate confirmation that the ‘group’ category that was originally conferred on the group by virtue of its being part of the

engagement process, has been confirmed by the practices of the group itself, which have been oriented towards a ‘mutual purpose’ and a ‘common goal’.

## 6.6 Summary of case study

It is important to note that trust is never discussed or ever explicitly mentioned in the CLG meeting data in this study and yet it is evidently on display. Close analysis of the CLG narrative has shown a marked similarity in the linguistic and discursive features of the CLG members’ turns. Similar lexico-grammatical choices are made by CLG members and the same metaphors and same type of humour are evident across turns. This discursive mirroring behaviour is emotionally loaded and displays alignments in the members’ social and emotional interpretations of CLG events.

Participants operationalise the same *JOURNEY*, *BANKIN*, and *WAR* metaphors across turns and in so doing align themselves to each other and to the group. This is especially clear in the members’ use of the *WAR* metaphor which is internally constituted and reliant on the members’ shared experiences for its comprehensibility. The employment of the *WAR* metaphor for a type of black humour further indicates that the members have come to trust each other and can laugh together at their past conflicts.

Humour and laughter is a further significant indication of relational trust. It indicates participants who have come to identify with each other in such a way that they can cross personal ‘lines’ that constrain less close relationships (Goffman, 1967). The humour and laughter is co-constructed throughout the CLG narrative by all of the main participants and is used by participants as a tool to reflect on the group’s relationship rather than as a means to forge alignments. The type of personally directed humour evident in the CLG narrative reinforces the fact that trust already exists in the members’ relationships. This indicates that the humour is not being used for strategic purposes but rather to confirm and maintain a shared consciousness of interpersonal trust.

In this CLG, trust has been shown to have developed as a result of a conscious ‘calculative’ decision to focus on maintaining, or ‘investing’, in the group relationship (see section 6.4.1). This was followed up, where possible, by the introduction of collaborative processes such as the ‘live’ minute procedure (see section 6.4.2). It is likely that the crisis that the group faced prior to Fran’s arrival was a driver of the original decision, and their commitment, to developing relational trust. Some trust researchers argue that conflict, such as that which is evidenced in this CLG, is crucial for deep ‘authentic’ forms of trust. They propose that mutually beneficial

relationships can only be developed if participants have faced, shared and been able to work through and resolve problems together, thus becoming cognisant of how each reacts in a crisis (e.g. Solomon & Flores, 2001; Miranda & Klement, 2009). It thus seems plausible that, in this particular CLG, the group's initial period of crisis inadvertently served to enhance group relationships and trust by producing a strong sense of camaraderie.

Most significantly, the co-constructed narrative is not a simple recount of past events; in fact it never directly refers to any specific event that the group experienced in its past. Rather, it provides evidence of emotionally and socially evaluated reflections which have 'entered into the biography of the speaker' (Labov, 1997) and as such indicates a group whose members have developed strong relationships based on relational trust.

## **6.7 Limitations and implications**

The findings of this study are limited by its focus on a single case and also by the main finding of discursive mirroring being principally based on close analysis of unavoidably ambiguous audio-recordings. Although I was embedded at Velcon's for four and half years, had knowledge of the CLG group's prior history, was present at the CLG meetings and had access to observational field notes taken during ethnographic phases of this research, access to video recordings of the CLG meetings would have helped to validate my findings in this study. Video recorded data would have shown more clearly the affective sub-factor at play in the CLG by allowing for analysis of participants' body language and facial expressions, especially when incidences of humour, laughter and stress were on display. The conclusion that the CLG's laughter signified relief type humour, and was group rather than individual laughter, was based on the audio recorded data, my knowledge of the group's prior conflict and my observational field notes. This conclusion could have been much more convincingly supported if there had been access to video as well as audio recordings. Future research might take note of this and seek to include additional sources of data, including video recordings and reflective participant interviews, to support potential findings of discursive mirroring in their research participants' interactions.

The implication of this study for future research is its main finding that discursive mirroring is indicative of interpersonal trust. Also significant is that this mirroring behaviour is linked to affect and that there is evidence of Lewicki *et al's* (2006) 'affective sub-factor' in play therefore allowing the conclusion to be drawn that the trust between CLG members is relationally based. This relational trust is evidenced through the participants' use of emotively charged metaphors, humour and the framing of their discourse as narrative. These linguistic features have

previously been associated with relationship building (e.g. Holmes 2006; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Cameron & Masden, 2009), however, they have not previously been linked to indicating trust. Future studies of workplace based relationships might seek to test this proposition by analysing the interactions of participants who have known each other for some time. Research might also consider whether there are other linguistic markers of trust that have not been highlighted in this study as well as what drives these features to present in participant interactions.

Of particular interest in this study, and in contrast to the two preceding studies, is that trust is never explicitly mentioned in the four CLG meetings. What is, however, marked in the audio recordings is that the CLG narrative constitutes a break in meeting proceedings and a 'critical moment' (Candlin, 1987) for the group. A further research consideration might be to examine whether discursive mirroring is 'cued' more in critical moments, or whether it is consistently present in close trusting relationships. Further, the critical moment in this study was centred on personal issues concerning the CLG participant's shared history and experiences rather than on the business at hand. Whether discursive mirroring that is less personally focussed could also indicate relational trust is something that is also worthy of further investigation. It would also be interesting to explore whether discursive mirroring occurs in interactions where trust is 'cued' by the researcher and is an explicit topic of conversation.

A final implication of this study is that, although one can potentially demonstrate evidence of discursive mirroring simply by undertaking DA at a micro-level, it would be difficult to conclude that this represents more than a 'snapshot' of trust without recourse to prior knowledge about the context(s), situations and people involved in the interactions. Even if elements of discursive mirroring are evident in participant interactions it will not always be related to trust, or indicate that relational trust is present. Mirroring may simply be evidence that trust work is taking place and that it is relational trust that is in development. What makes the finding of discursive mirroring significant in this study is that it is supported by data collected for other perspectives of the MPF. The achievement of genuine, interpersonal trust, or as Solomon and Flores (2001) would define it 'authentic trust' is, as this study strongly suggests, simply not achievable in relationships where there is no shared participant history, or where participants have not shared a 'third cup of tea'.

### **Part 3: General conclusions and practical relevance**

Part 3 focuses on the key findings from each of the case studies and draws general conclusions from the research taken as whole. The relevance of this thesis to providing empirical support for trust theory is discussed. Recommendations are made as to how this thesis can inform the practices of organisations and practitioners who are seeking to develop more sustainable organisation-stakeholder relationships through the specific implementation of trust work.

Part 3 consists of one chapter, Chapter 7, which includes the following three sections:

7.1 General conclusions

7.2 Practical relevance of research

7.3 Concluding comments

## 7.1 General conclusions

This research set out to investigate relational trust and its development in the context of organisation-stakeholder relationships using discourse analytic tools. The overall research objective was not merely to identify organisational practices that constitute trust work but rather to take a more holistic stance and also account for the many factors that influence these practices. This research has used case studies to investigate empirically the development of organisation-stakeholder trust in three different organisations. The three studies have offered different insights into how trust was conceptualised and discursively mediated, at each of these research sites. In each case, it was clear that the orientation taken by the organisation towards trust was multiply-influenced. The wider macro-social context(s), the history and traditions of the organisation, the organisation's field of practice and participants' ontological perceptions of trust (see section 3.4.3.2 for more on this) had all influenced the type of trust work that was being implemented by each organisation. Application of the MPF to the studies allowed for the capture of these influences and the opportunity to triangulate data from the MPF's different perspectives in order to achieve research ecological validity (Cicourel, 2007; see section 3.4.1)

Overall, this research has investigated a very wide range of social and discursive practices that constitute what I have referred to in this thesis as 'trust work'. This has included forms of written documentation that may represent the first point of contact in organisation-stakeholder relationships such as the proposals and company reports examined in the first case study. A specific trust-building strategy (TBS) was examined in the second study of Gunz Dental which was itself an amalgamation of different written, behavioural and interactive trust work practices. The research has also considered, through discursive analysis, various interactive practices that comprise types of organisational trust work. These included the community liaison group (CLG) meetings examined in the third study and the participant interviews which were considered across all three of the case studies. Ethnographic and discourse analytical analysis of these trust-work practices has not defined relational trust *per se* and, as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.1, that was never the intention of this research. Rather, it has allowed for description, explanation and interpretation (Fairclough, 1992; 2010) of how trust is pursued in three different workplace settings and, generally speaking, how trust may be discursively displayed.

The most significant finding from the three studies is the fact that trust work is context, situation and person-specific. This finding supports the work of trust theoreticians such as Blomqvist (1997) and Bhattacharya *et al* (1998) and suggests the need for case study approaches to trust research that are able to provide insights into the 'autobiographical' nature

of trust (Lewicki *et al*, 2006). Even when the ‘ontological landscape’ of trust is similar, as was the case in the three research sites in this study, the explicit form that trust work takes differs, suggesting that the outcomes of trust work are in fact only assessable *in situ*.

The shared ontological perspectives on trust that emerged from each of the research sites were based, in each case, on the managers’ framings of their organisational culture as relational. This resulted in each of the sites prioritising the development of trust in their various organisation-stakeholder relationships and explicitly implementing trust-work practices. In spite of these similarities, the specific orientation to trust work at each site diverged because of the purpose(s) for which trust was being developed and the specific stakeholder group in focus at the time of this present research. These variations account for the thesis being presented as three separate, ‘stand-alone’ studies. There is, however, scope to draw general conclusions from each of the studies as to how different stages of relational trust development in organisation-stakeholder relationships can be discursively represented and implemented.

The orientation to trust work at each research site primarily offered conditions for collaboration and the achievement of mutuality with stakeholders. These conditions were discursively framed not as ‘conduits’ (Reddy, 1979) or uni-directional channels of communication, but as dialogic and interactive practices (see Brunig *et al*, 2008; Foster & Jonker, 2005). These site-specific orientations characterise relational trust as a mutual accomplishment and thus intrinsically support a developmental theory of trust (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.1). Developmental trust theory typically characterises trust as growing gradually and cumulatively over time as participants build up a mutual repertoire based on their shared experiences, shared interactions and shared knowledge. Although the developmental view of trust is generally supported by empirical trust research, the vexing question has remained as to exactly how relational trust develops. Is the development of relational trust linear? Does that progression simply move from no trust to high trust? as was suggested by the trust continuum presented in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.1) or, Does trust transform and change over time? (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.2). Following on from this last question is the supposition that there are different forms of trust. It is in response to these types of questions that this research is able to provide general empirical support.

Each of the studies in this thesis represents a different stage in the development of organisation-stakeholder trust. These different stages have been broadly represented through analogy with the Balti proverb of the ‘Three Cups of Tea’ (Mortensen & Relin, 2006). This analogy was described in the preface to Part 2 of this thesis and I have found that it provides a convenient way for stakeholder practitioners to conceptualise organisation-stakeholder trust as developed in three broadly different stages. The remainder of this section of Chapter 7 elaborates on how

each of the aforementioned stages is represented in this thesis and how each of these stages is discursively characterised.

Rather than present the discursive construction of the ‘three cups of tea’ in the order that would mirror an unproblematic trust continuum, I first present what constitutes the extreme ends of this continuum, i.e. the first and third cups of tea. The trust that is represented by these ends of the trust continuum, that is, either not having or having trust, is considered in trust literature to represent ‘simple’ rather than ‘complex’ forms of trust (Lewicki *et al*, 2006). From the practitioner perspective, these forms of trust are likely to be relatively straightforward in terms of the practices that might be instituted to help each to develop. In contrast, trust as it evolves between the two ends of the trust continuum, as evidenced in the study of Gunz Dental, can be messy and far from straightforward and is likely to represent challenges to the organisations and stakeholder practitioners who are involved in its development at this stage.

### **7.1.1 Discursively characterising the initiation of trust.**

#### **‘The first cup of tea we are strangers’.**

The first study of Branhams represents an initial stage of relational trust development. In this study, the contextual conditions framing the initiation of the organisation-stakeholder relationship were: limited experience with the prospective stakeholder, limited knowledge of the prospective stakeholder and limited opportunity for face-to-face interactions with the prospective stakeholder. Such social-contextual conditions are not unique to Branhams and characterise the basis upon which many new and often ‘virtual’, organisation-stakeholder relationships are now founded (e.g. Lipnack & Stamps, 1997; McKnight *et al*, 1998).

The key finding of the first case study, that of Branhams, provides discursive evidence in support of theories of initial trust formation in organisational relationships (see McKnight *et al*, 1998; Six & Sorge, 2008). These theories suggest that in the absence of first-hand knowledge of, or experience with, the other party, the initiation of trust is dependent on a trustor’s ability to ‘cue’ trust. This cueing, however, relies on creating a good first impression that will stimulate the trustee’s interest enough to lead to the next stage of the relationship. In the case where a good first impression cannot be created through face-to-face interaction, as was the case at Branhams, this cueing relies on the trustor being able to assure the trustee that the necessary impersonal structures are in place to ensure a successful future relationship (see Zucker, 1986; Shapiro, 1997; McKnight *et al*. 1998). The business proposals described in the first study

represent a specific carefully designed organisational instrument through which such cueing is enacted.

It is significant that in the first case study, Branhams retained relative freedom in constructing its proposals and was not beholden to the specific client proposal demands that typify larger tendering processes. One might expect that as a newly established relationally oriented organisation which describes itself as ‘alternative’ (see Chapter 4, section 4.4), Branhams would construct its proposals in a way that breaks with proposal conventions. Interestingly, Branhams does not do this, but rather cues client trust by discursively aligning itself with a pre-established and recognised institutional order. Through evocation of the conceptual world and the discourses of assurance and accountancy, Branhams offers prospective clients the perception that it has experience in an affiliated field of practice to the client’s and thus has the requisite tools and experience to facilitate effective organisation-client relationships. By offering the client something that is ‘known’ or is perceived to be ‘situationally normal’ (Goffman, 1981; 1986), Branhams is effectively drawing on institution-based and organisation-based trust in order to initiate its client relationships. The perception of situational normality, as offered through various customary and established social and discursive workplace practices, is also held to be an important consideration in ‘the ongoing negotiation of interpersonal workplace cooperation’ (see Torpey & Johnson, 2013).

In drawing general conclusions from this case study about how trust is discursively constructed in the initial stages of development, it is clear that communicating a perception of situational normality is important. The discursive accomplishment of situational normality relies on appropriation of externally validated, established and recognised institutionalised discourses that are perceived to be inherently trustworthy. This finding supports trust theory that claims relational trust in organisations to be impersonally founded (Chapter 2, section 2.5.1). In other words, when the inception of the organisation-stakeholder relationship is taking place between strangers, trust is cued not through interpersonal discourse but rather through impersonal, externally validated discourse that frames the relationship as transactionally rather than relationally oriented (see Chapter 2, section 2.5).

### **7.1.2 Discursively characterising established trust**

#### **‘The third cup of tea we are family’.**

Established trust is represented in this thesis by the third case study of the Community liaison group (CLG). The relationships between the members of this CLG had been developing over a period of four-and-a-half years at the time of this present study and they had by that time clearly

achieved strong trust-based relationships. This established trust is discursively characterised by the CLG members' use of a shared repertoire discursive and also by their frequently enacted affective ties. Specifically, these affective ties are displayed through the CLG members use of:

- personally oriented 'in-group' humour,
- co-constructed metaphors
- the co-construction of narratives of experience
- categorisation of themselves as a cohesive 'group'.

The cumulative effect of these discursive features is represented by participants' employment of discursive mirroring behaviour. In this case, relational trust is no longer dependent on external impersonal discourses, as it was in the initial stages of trust creation at Branhams, but is able to draw on the participants' interpersonal experiences with each other.

The overall findings from this case study support theoretical claims that relational trust has an emotional basis (e.g. Lewicki *et al*, 2006; Solomon & Flores, 2001; Lewis & Weigert, 1985) and that once established it is continually strengthened from 'within the relationship itself' (Rousseau *et al*, 1998, p. 399). This study, however, extends relational trust theory by providing empirical evidence to suggest that discursive mirroring behaviour is an indicator that relational trust has been established.

### **7.1.3 Discursively characterising the mid-stage of trust development**

#### **'The second cup of tea you become a friend'**

The first and third case studies provide empirical evidence in support of each of the two extremes of a postulated continuum of trust development, viewed as the inception and the culmination of the organisation-stakeholder relationships. These two forms of trust are described in trust theory as 'simple' (Lewicki *et al*, 2006) trust because they represent the polar opposites of having and not having trust. A more complex view of relational trust development is presented in the second study of Gunz Dental. This study suggests that trust development between the two poles, as exemplified by the first and third case studies, does not always follow a straight or predictable trajectory.

Gunz Dental represents a contradiction to theories of linear trust development. The findings from the Gunz case study suggest that trust in organisation-stakeholder relationships is finely

balanced and pivots simultaneously around both issues of trust and distrust. This case study provides discursive evidence in support of two-dimensional models of trust (Lewicki *et al*, 2006). Two-dimensional trust theories, as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.5.3), propose that trust and distrust are distinct phenomena and can co-exist in the same relationship. Further, both trust and distrust may follow different trajectories and each has the potential to strengthen and/or recede. Findings from the second study also suggest that the co-existence of trust and distrust is often latent, or covert, in organisation-stakeholder relationships, making it hard for organisations to ascertain when and how issues of trust are affecting their operations.

The Gunz case study, which focuses on the manager-employee relationship, provides discursive evidence of affectively based friendships between managers and employees. At Gunz Dental it is clear that employees and managers like each other. However, this case study has also provided discursive evidence that employees are nonetheless wary of certain facets of their relationships with their managers which had in the past warranted interpersonal distrust.

Interestingly, from a discourse analytic perspective, the employees' distrust was never explicitly verbalised in the course of participants' interactions. Employees' distrust of their managers' abilities only became 'visible' after close analytical engagement with the data set at Gunz Dental and especially following close discursive analysis of transcripts of participant interviews. Moreover, the finding that employees harboured distrust of their managers relied more on analysis of what was *not* verbalised rather than on what was. Employees freely expressed their liking for managers but, when it came to expressing distrust, issues of face prevented employees from explicitly articulating their distrust. In this case study, there was therefore a stark contrast between the discursive expression of relational trust and distrust. In articulating trust, Gunz's employees spoke confidently, used declarative statements, and overtly emotive language such as 'I love...' and 'I like...' (Chapter 5, section 5.6.2). Meanwhile employees' distrust of their managers remained unspoken and was expressed through covert features of spoken discourse such as changes in footing, hesitations, pausing and the use of lexical hedging (Chapter 5, section 5.6.4).

The overall finding from the Gunz case study is that the discourse analytic approach was crucial for shedding light on the co-construction of (dis)trust in organisation-stakeholder relationships. Indeed without the findings that resulted from the discourse analytic intervention at Gunz, the issues surrounding employee-manager trust may never have emerged. The remainder of this chapter addresses the practical relevance of this finding and the findings of Case studies 1 and 3, to stakeholder practitioners. The chapter will also suggest, in section 7.3, how organisation-based trust work can be enhanced by the implementation of a discourse analytic approach.

## **7.2 Practical relevance**

A main aim of this research was to seek outcomes of practical relevance for organisations and practitioners seeking to develop trust work practices. Problematic with implementing any form of trust work is that the desired outcome, i.e. trust, towards which the trust work is geared, is unlikely to be defined by a Eureka moment that can clearly define its presence. As such, trust is a potentially frustrating and time-consuming concept for organisations and stakeholder practitioners to work with. However, a number of discourse analytic methodologies used in this research have been effective in capturing features of trust in each of the three studies and are potentially of great practical relevance to organisations and practitioners. These methodologies are qualitatively grounded. They provide a practical means for tracking the development of trust in organisation-stakeholder relationships over time. Of particular significance is the incorporation of researcher-led reflective practices and DA into the investigation of trust work. These methods can provide organisations with the tools to more effectively address issues of trust.

Prior to detailing the practical relevance of this research, I note an important caveat; that is, that I want to specifically avoid presenting a standardised ‘one size fits all’ solution to the development of organisation-stakeholder trust. I have proposed that the development of trust might be broadly conceptualised through analogy with the ‘Three Cups of Tea’. I have also suggested how each of these cups of tea is typically discursively characterised. This is meant to provide a broad overview of generic features of relational trust. My firm belief, which has been strengthened by the findings of this research, is that the design and implementation of trust work, structured to help organisations develop trust in their organisation-stakeholder relationships, must be an outcome of bespoke tailoring, rather than one of mass production. Applied linguists and discourse analysts have a number of tools at their disposal that are valuable to this endeavour but ultimately these tools are only likely to be effective if they are adaptable to the situation, conditions and personnel in a particular workplace setting.

### **7.2.1 Reflective practice and trust work**

It is clear from this research that trust remains a largely hidden aspect of the organisation-stakeholder relationship. In spite of the focus in this research on specially selected sites with a demonstrated interest in trust, trust was referred to infrequently across the corpus of data collected in the course of this research. Where trust was explicitly referred to, it was most often just cued (for example, during participant interviews).

Trust researchers such as Solomon & Flores (2001) and Lewicki *et al* (2006) have suggested that the route to developing trust is to talk openly about it. Findings from this research suggest that this is challenging in practice. Intangible constructs such as trust are difficult to explicitly verbalise. Even though the Directors of Branhams and Gunz Dental both subscribe to an organisational view of trust in line McEvily *et al's* (2007) contention that trust should be an 'organising principle', they each had notable difficulty in clearly defining what they actually meant by trust (see Chapter 3, Extracts 3.2 & 3.3). In spite of the difficulty that remains in defining what trust is, as a developmental and actionable phenomenon, trust is open to reflection.

The majority of the insights into relational trust gained during this research were an outcome of the exercise of 'reflective practice' (Schön, 1983; 1987). Reflective practice is inherently evaluative and this makes it a particularly suitable approach for developing trust which is, as previously discussed (see Chapter 2, section 2.8), an outcome of explicit or implicit evaluative practices. Two main forms of reflective practice have been examined in this trust research: participant interviews and narratives of experience.

Semi-structured participant interviews were employed in each of the three case studies and in line with Talmy (2010) Talmy (2011) and Talmy & Richards (2011) were viewed not merely as a research tool but as a form of social practice. During these interviews, participants were explicitly asked to conceptualise trust and to relate these conceptions to their own organisation-stakeholder relationships. Narratives of experience, which were provided in the course of participant interviews, in the CLG meetings in the third case study as well as in organisational documentation such as Gunz Dental's staff newsletter, also provided the opportunity to evaluate issues of trust. Both participant interviews and participant narratives constitute forms of reflective practice that allow for 'reflection *on* action' and 'reflection *in* action' (Schön, 1983). Reflective practice, as defined by Schön (1983), is generally associated with workplace practitioners or researchers, rather than the layperson. Reflection *in* action concerns a practitioner's immediate reasoning as to 'what is going on here and now' (Sarangi & Candlin, 2003, p. 276) whereas 'reflection *on* action' (Schön, 1983) occurs later when a practitioner is thinking back about what happened with a view to learning something from this reflection.

For the stakeholder-practitioner both reflection *in* action and reflection *on* action have the potential to provide useful insights into the conceptions and practices associated with trust work. More significantly, such reflective practice has the potential to reflexively drive changes to trust work. The example of Gunz Dental is a case in point. Following discussions with Gunz management on the finding of employee-manager distrust, Gunz implemented changes to the

work practices of its mid-line managers. These changes offered the managers more opportunities for interaction with employees about work tasks and also ensured that managers became more accountable for their own work practices. For example, managers were, for the first time, asked to provide details of how they would allocate the budget for their business unit. This task had previously been the sole responsibility of executive management. This change to practice provided the mid-line managers with the opportunity to demonstrate some of the abilities that employees had previously suggested they were lacking. The anticipated outcome of this change was to present employees with tangible evidence that their managers had the requisite abilities to manage and thereby lessen employees' distrust in this facet of the employee-manager relationship.

A further outcome of using researcher-inspired reflective practice as a form of practical trust work in the organisation is that it provides material that can be reflexively applied to a range of other organisational practices. In the third study of the CLG, it is significant that trust developed following opportunities for personal evaluation. In one-on-one conversations with Fran the facilitator, following her arrival in the CLG, group alignments became evident which had not previously been known to all the CLG members. Fran explicitly describes these alignments to the CLG members during their meetings and in this manner provided the CLG members with evidence of their alignments rather than of the differences that had, up to that point, characterised their relationships. It is no coincidence that a conscious decision to work collaboratively was taken by the CLG members shortly after this input from Fran. The feedback that can be provided from individual, or group reflective practice, thus provides a significant trust work resource that has the potential to enhance the development of organisation-stakeholder trust.

A reflective practice orientation can also be incorporated directly into trust work by the specific implementation of practices that allow for evaluation. In the third study, CLG trust was evidenced in a co-constructed reflective narrative rather than in normalised meeting interactions and was the product of socially rather than transactionally oriented talk (Holmes, 2005). This would suggest that embedding opportunities for evaluative forms of talk into organisation-stakeholder communications, once relationships have been initiated, provides a potential means of developing greater levels of trust.

### **7.2.2 Discourse analysis and trust work**

Each of the studies suggests that DA has a role to play in trust work. In the second case study of Gunz, where a specific terminology was constructed to mediate talk about trust, this terminology was clearly limited in its ability to explicitly address sensitive issues such as distrust when ‘face’ was at stake. Employees were reluctant in the participant interviews to openly state that they distrusted their managers’ abilities to manage because they liked them as people and were otherwise friendly with them. It was only through close discursive analysis of the transcripts of participant interviews that employee’s distrust of managers was revealed. Equally, it was as an outcome of close discursive analysis of the CLG narrative that participants’ relational trust was confirmed and accounted for. This would suggest that closely engaging with transcripts of authentic interactions and organisational documentation, using the tools of DA, has a place in trust work and could be usefully incorporated into organisation-stakeholder engagement processes.

The integration of analysis of participants’ interactions into organisation-stakeholder engagement processes has, to my knowledge, rarely been undertaken. Although studies have retrospectively analysed transcripts of organisation-stakeholder events, meetings, or activities (e.g. Iedema, 2003; Jahansoozi, 2007; Parsons, 2009; Jackson, 2013) these transcripts are rarely used as a resource whilst stakeholder engagement is in train. The introduction of findings from analysis of participant transcriptions, if undertaken in a way that complements rather than disrupts engagement, has the potential to enrich trust work by raising participants’ awareness of current trust issues, placing trust on the agenda as something to be openly talked about, and providing timely feedback on trust as a recognisable and necessary facet of a relationship as it develops.

### **7.2.3 Challenges to the implementation of discourse analytic approaches in workplace settings**

The integration of discourse analytic approaches into organisational practice is not without controversy and, as Delin (2005) notes, ‘goes against the traditional application of these methods’ (Delin, 2005, p. 37). DA does not offer organisations a ‘quick fix’ and has the potential to be both expensive and time-consuming.

The implementation of reflective practices that elicit stakeholder narratives and evaluations of practice offers organisations and their stakeholders a window into the ‘human dimensions of organisational life’ (Taylor *et al*, 2010). However, these practices rely on participants being able

to take time out from their day-to-day workplace activities or for sections of stakeholder-engagement practices to be set aside for reflection on organisation-stakeholder relationships. Commercial organisations do not automatically see the value of this and may view it as merely a way of paying for their stakeholders to have a chat. This is a challenge that both researchers and workplace practitioners will need to face when recommending reflective practice and discourse analysis to organisations as useful tools for analysing trust work.

A further issue arises from the type of material –transcripts of verbal interactions– that are most commonly produced by discourse analysts. Organisational participants are unlikely to be interested in the level of detail that close linguistic analysis of their discursive practices produces. Further, laypeople rarely use the metalanguage used by discourse analysts to describe their findings. However, in my experience, if organisations are provided with discursive evidence, especially if taken from their own interactions, they begin to see the value of a discourse analytic approach. This was certainly the case at Gunz, where one of the aims of the research project was to illuminate issues with Gunz's TBS. Analysis of sections of participants' interviews, when presented and explained to management in layman's terms, was viewed as a valuable way of illuminating the company's trust issues.

A particular challenge for trust work is the difficulty for organisations in quantifying trust. This frustration was expressed on several occasions during the course of this research,] and especially during my time with Gunz. Both MD and HR, in adopting the TBS, had assumed that it would be 'fully implemented' within eighteen months and they were disappointed when it was not. Although HR felt that the TBS was effective, she vented her frustrations in the following manner:

We can feel it, like I can feel it. How I try and explain it now is, we've got to the, you're at the edge of the cliff and you know it's not far but how do you know when you're there? How do you feel? What's the measurement?

The tension between qualitative and quantitative approaches to trust work remains an issue for the practical application of a discourse analytic approach. This is clear from HR's comment and the inherent contradiction in her use of the terms 'feel' versus 'measure'. Even with a targeted strategy such as the TBS, trust work does not operate as a standard organisational strategy, does not have a definitive end date and does not automatically produce measurable outcomes. Trust work is ongoing. Thus the level of DA required to capture meaningful accounts of trust development is likely to be high and require the continual monitoring of organisation-stakeholder relationships. However, when one considers the complexity of interpersonal relationships and the fact that:

Across the spectrum of different facets within a complex relationship, ambivalence or ‘complex trust’ (some combined level of trust and distrust) toward another is probably more common than simple trust or simple distrust.

(Lewicki, 2006, p. 1003)

it is unsurprising that the consequences of distrust, or losing the trust of one's stakeholders, as evidenced during the GFC, can be potentially devastating for an organisation.

A discourse analytic approach to organisational trust can alleviate some of the uncertainty felt by organisations who are attempting to create trust in their relationships and yet have little means of assessing the effectiveness of their endeavours. DA provides a means through which trust can potentially be tracked and analysed. It can add value to trust work by identifying social and discursive practices and facets of these practices that both benefit and have the potential to hamper, the development of trust. A discourse analytic approach can also reveal participants’ alignments with, and feelings towards, another party, thus providing evidence of where trust is situated, where it is being built and where it is breaking down. Discourse analysis, if viewed as an ‘interventionist’ activity (Antaki, 2011) in organisational practice, can provide a basis for future decision-making concerning trust work. This, as the Director of Branham suggests in the following comment is, in a growing number of contemporary organisations, seen as an organisation’s most essential future asset:

I think we’ll see better organisations become more sophisticated so when they are talking about building their stakeholder engagement frameworks they are really talking about processes within the business to protect and maintain one of our greatest future assets which is trust, because we now recognise that when we lose that we (.) our licence to operate goes and sooner or later we’re going to be in serious trouble.

Director, Branham

### **7.3 Concluding comments**

This research was based on the premise that trust is crucial for effective organisation-stakeholder relationships and that organisations would benefit from paying closer attention to its development. As the contemporary organisation comes to a growing realisation that sustaining its existence pivots around issues of trust, understanding and implementing what has been referred to in this thesis as ‘trust work’ becomes an organisational imperative.

The research reported here represents an empirical contribution to trust research by offering explanations and interpretations of how trust develops in selected organisation-stakeholder relationships. It has demonstrated that trust is multi-faceted and influenced by the contexts, situations and people with whom we have contact. The research has also shown that within the

same organisation, trust and distrust may co-exist and that each may be operationalised in different ways. It is also clear from this research that, even when research findings appear to support a particular trust theory, as is the case with the two-dimensional trust theories (Lewicki *et al*, 2006) highlighted in the second case study, trust is unlikely to be interpretable through reference to trust theory alone. Empirical evidence is the key to unlocking the complexities of trust, most especially in the context of complex organisation-stakeholder relationships.

Given the centrality of organisation-stakeholder trust to organisational effectiveness and sustainability, further research into trust work is warranted. Specifically, comparative data is needed from longitudinal studies that are able to track and capture the development of relational trust over time. The application of discourse analytic methods and techniques are particularly suited to an examination of the dynamic and complex nature of organisation-stakeholder (dis)trust and organisational trust work. This thesis is a first step on the journey to providing empirical contributions to theories of relational trust development.

## Appendix 1: Transcription conventions

The following transcription notations are used in transcribing interactional data throughout this thesis. They are based on Gail Jefferson's (1984) widely used approach to transcription.

YES	Capitals indicate emphatic stress
((laughs))	paralinguistic features in brackets
(.)	pause of up to second
(1.5)	timed pauses
[   ]	simultaneous speech
(hello)	transcriber's best guess at indecipherable unclear utterances
-	incomplete or cut off utterance
=	latching, i.e. where the speaker's next turn follows on without any pause
... ..	section of transcript omitted
:	lengthening of syllables
( <u>  </u> )	underlining shows speaker emphasis
(.h)	intake of breath
(hh)	sighing out
(ha,ha)	laughter

## Appendix 2: The AA1000 standard series

The AA1000 was introduced by AccountAbility in 2003, in an effort to legitimise a professional and acceptable standard for reporting on sustainability. The standard ‘guides organisations in establishing systematic accountability processes that involve Stakeholders in the generation of strategies, policies and programmes as well as associated indicators, targets and communication systems, which effectively guide decisions, activities and overall organisational performance’ (AA1000 Assurance Standard, p. 33).

The introduction to the standard claims that AccountAbility’s AA1000 Assurance Standard is ‘the first initiative offering a non-proprietary open-source Assurance standard covering the full range of an organisation’s disclosure and associated performance, i.e. ‘Sustainability’ Reporting and performance’ (AA1000 Assurance Standard. AccountAbility, 2003, p. 4). The AA 1000 series was designed to be consistent with the GRI sustainability reporting guidelines.

The standard is predicated on the organisation’s commitment to ‘inclusivity’ which means the:

- Commitment to *identify* and *understand* its [the organisation’s] social, economic and environmental impact and performance and the associated views of its Stakeholders
- Commitment to *consider* and *coherently* respond (whether negatively or positively) to the aspirations and needs of its stakeholders in its policies and practices and
- Commitment to *provide* an account to its stakeholders for its decisions, actions and impacts.

(AA1000 Assurance Standard, AccountAbility, 2003. P.11)

The 3 principles of materiality, completeness and responsiveness guide the AA 1000 Series of standards.

### Materiality

The materiality principle requires that the assurance provider states ‘whether the Reporting Organisation has included in the Report the information about its Sustainability required by its Stakeholders for them to be able to make informed judgements, decisions and actions’ p14 AA1000 Assurance Standard’.

Some of the parameters of this aspect might include: compliance performance, policy performance and peer-based norms, but in terms of Stakeholder materiality this principle looks at the impact on stakeholder behaviour as well as performance that is demonstrably relevant to stakeholder views and perceptions.

**Completeness**

Where the Assurance Provider evaluates the extent to which the reporting organisation can identify and understand material aspects of its sustainability performance (p 17).

**Responsiveness**

Requires an evaluation of whether the reporting organisation has ‘responded to Stakeholder concerns, policies and relevant standards and adequately communicated these responses in its Report’ (p 18).

Both quantitative and qualitative information can be included to demonstrate compliance with these 3 principles.

### **Appendix 3: Standards used for sustainability reporting**

In its infancy, sustainability reporting remained an ad hoc practice and organisations chose the way in which, if any, they reported on their economic, environmental and social performances. Models of how sustainability reporting might most effectively be carried out began to emerge in the late 1990s.

There are several models used across the world for sustainability reporting, the main ones of which are outlined briefly below:

- EMAS (1995 updated 2001). This model is the European environmental management and audit system which was originally created to improve environmental performance across the EU (European Union). Since 2001 it has been more commonly used in tandem with acquiring ISO 14001 (see below).
- ISO 14001 (1997 updated 2002). This International Organisation for Standardisation – Environmental standard is similar to other quality control standards issued by ISO. ISO standards are internationally recognised and often used by corporations as part of their marketing strategies.
- SA 8000 (1998). This model is the Social Accountability International labour standard which was recently renamed as the Social Accountability International (SAI) Standard. It is a standard that is concerned with fair labour practices across the globe.
- The Copenhagen Charter (1999). This was launched at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Social and Ethical Accounting, Auditing and Reporting held in Copenhagen in 1999. It was developed by the Danish arm of accountants: KMPG, Ernst and Young, Price Waterhouse Coopers and the House of Mandag Morgan. Its focus is on helping managers to develop sensitivity to stakeholder values and to incorporate this into their communications with stakeholders.
- AA1000 and AA1000AS (AS = the Australian version of the standard) (1999). Developed by the Institute for Social and Ethical Accountability (ISEA) this was the first standard 'for building corporate accountability and trust' (Reynolds & Yuthas 2007, p. 52). The focus of this standard is on improving overall organisational performance. It also has, as part of its requirements, auditing and quality assurance. Users of this system are expected to engage with their external stakeholders as part of their reporting process. In 2005 the ISEA also developed a specific standard for

stakeholder engagement known as the AA1000SES which has recently (2010) been under revision.

- GRI (2000, updated 2002) The Global Reporting Initiative Sustainability Reporting Guidelines are arguably the most recognised and used set of guidelines worldwide for preparing sustainability reports. GRI evolved from CERES (The Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies) and was established in 1997 with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The GRI is made up of a large multi-stakeholder network of thousands of experts worldwide and its mission is to develop 'globally applicable guidelines for reporting on the economic, environmental and social performance of corporations, governments and non-governmental organizations' (NGOs). ([www.globalreporting.org](http://www.globalreporting.org)).

The headquarters of the GRI are in Amsterdam and GRI now has as its core mission the maintenance, enhancement and dissemination of the GRI guidelines across the globe through a process of ongoing consultation and stakeholder engagement.

Notably, and of particular relevance for the first case study in Chapter 4, is the fact that the AA1000, AA1000AS, AA1000SES and GRI all have a built-in requirement for verification, and it is here that the aspect of auditing and assurance comes into organisational sustainability programs .

#### Appendix 4: CLG Narrative transcript

1. Ivor ... .. the main reason I came down here was to thank the community representatives for for their input over what has been a very long time in some cases but most particularly (.) the last fo:ur years is it? (.) [the CLG?]
2. Joy [as long as that?] Jeez=
3. Ivor = volunteer time, after hours volunteer time not just at these meetings but I know that you read all the stuff and some of it I've seen and I (.) I think the fact that you've read it is a remarkable thing so I congratulate you on that. But not only do you read it but you have comments and you feed them in here and invest huge amounts of time and you invest huge amounts of emotional energy if I can put it that way and that that's exhausting as well (.)and I know that we have a much better project (.)as a consequence of your input and for that I'm very, very grateful so thank you again for hours and hours and hours of very valuable time. so I thank you for that (.) and I hope you are enjoying the outcome.
4. Joy [We:ll]
5. Mary [Thank you Ivor] we are=
6. Joy = we are and we should thank you because since you took over you have been available to us you have um (.) withstood the slings and arrows that have been fired at you from us(.) and answered most of the things that we've wanted answered um (.)and we hope that you'll continue to be available to us because I don't think it's all going to go away quietly =
7. Ivor = have you read my little letter, I've written to you [all?]
8. Joy [oh?]
9. Ivor and what I say here is ((reading from letter)) these final works are near completion there'll only be limited means of c- community consultation so don't hesitate to ring me. [I may not answer the phone]=
10. Joy [Thank you, well we have]
11. All ((general laughter))
12. Mary = we'll try not to too
13. Joy your willingness to discuss things and your willingness to talk about things which might not have been SO pleasant to talk about, you know, like how things are going um and I think we have all been grateful for that. And before I would like to thank Fran=
14. Fran = oh thank you

15. All ((hear hear))
16. Joy because we suffered terribly before you arrived =
17. Fran (Fran laughs) = and then a little bit more when I did arrive (Fran laughs again).
18. Joy N:o that's actually not a joke we suffered terribly and when you arrived we thought we might suffer a bit more but we all learned, you learned, and we all, we learned and I think I speak for all of us, all of us and we all have great respect for you and the way that you have conducted these meetings. We, some of us haven't always [agreed with you]
19. Fran ((sarcastically)) [is that right?] I hadn't noticed
20. All ((general laughter))
21. Joy [but] but we have always respected what you've done  
and I think that you deserve our thanks.
22. Fran ah thank you
23. Joy You have EARNED every bit and respect is something that you have to earn and you have earned every bit.
24. Fran Oh thank you thank you, thank you all. Well certainly um for me it's been it's been fantastic I mean there have been times when I have been thinking I need to be air-lifted out of here
25. All ((general laughter))
26. Fran you know on some, on some set of challenging evenings  
  
when um you know I had to sort of move you know into the strict mode um but I think that that even (.) at those times I think the group has found a way to move forward um and, and I'm a great believer that um you mustn't be afraid of a bit of conflict or, or of tension but having a way to work through it and move forward is what counts. And (.) it was my view that the group had got stuck there when I first came to the group. That you'd got stuck in that place and you didn't have any tools (.h) or processes to go forward. everybody said exactly the same things to me from all sides of the table and I think that (.) certainly my experience is when I fed that back to everyone there was a collective ah ha and a real collective (.h) you know, we agree we don't want it like this so and I think from that moment forward people did make a commitment to do things differently and it made a difference. so um thank you for your patience with me. I mean you know there have been times when the meetings have been tense and challenging but I think that everybody's put their investment into maintaining a relationship um (.)so that not only the project can move forward but also the issues can move forward and er that's commendable. I

mean I remain in awe of each of the community members' commitment  
 um you know the fact that Mary gets out there and walks these things and  
 can talk in such detail um the Banksia um the sh- you know the biting  
 Banksia

27. All ((general laughter))

28. Fran um the, you know um a number of things.

I mean Joy's gra:sp of all the numbers and the history

And Rob and you know the sort of the (.) um the creative abrasion that has  
 existed between the pedestrians and the cyclists and the motorists.

29. All ((general laughter))

30. Fran and there are some wonderful s- wonderful moments that sometimes you  
 you think if (.) only I could've captured that um but=.

31. Rob (leaning back in his chair) = I'm so pleased I've survived =

32. All ((general loud laughter))

33. Fran =you've gone grey=

34. All ((general laughter))

35. Sam =I was just going to say you look a lot better mate=

36. All =((general laughter))

37. Sam you look a lot more relaxed

38. Fran And you know um this group was much bigger and er a number of people  
 peeled off, as they always do (.) you know, through these processes but

39. Fran um, you know, the sort of the (.) few committed individuals that have  
 worked to see it all the way through er certainly deserve some recognition.  
 Brian was a late entrant um but I must say Brian your contribution has  
 always been very sound and objective and thoughtful (.)and I think  
 sometimes it has definitely taken the role of a bit of a (.h) peace maker and  
 a middle ground person in terms of when sides have polarised (.h)and  
 that's been very helpful to the group. It's um it's er been a very positive  
 contribution although you came in, came in later.

**(notable pause of 2.8 seconds)**

And I think just from um just from, from my part I think I, I also want to  
 recognise Velcon's contribution here. That they, er this project has I think  
 um (.) been managed extremely well and there have been times when  
 Velcon has d- gone, beyond what was expected and um (.) and that is at  
 the same time as managing a fairly (culling) project schedule. er that they

have invested the time in terms of responses even though at times you know at times it wasn't felt to be enough but I think that (.) in my view they they actually did really service the CLG to the best of their ability and (.) of course the state government um often takes it on the chin and um, um (.) you know I think that James before you and Cath your grasp of detail is absolutely scary to me um (.) you know and er absolutely (.) um compelling in terms of your ability to be able to remember and er (.) provide detail. Um Michael I think (.) you have taken on um actions that I know sometimes I haven't known where else to direct them and um you've taken them on in a generous way so er you know, on behalf of the CCLG thank you (.) And (.) I also want to say to Sally whilst we're saying thanks

40. Rob [hmmm]
41. Joy [oh yes thanks],
42. Fran because Sally, Sally's got the hardest job
43. All ((general laughter))
44. Fran in the room really I mean those minutes and the tension of things not talking to each other and you know when I came tonight Sally was saying it's, you know 4:47 and it's still not working. you know what do I do? type thing so Sally you've kept a cool head in um the sort of the um the face of um sometimes fairly sometimes you know a number of different conflicting opinions and you've (.) guided us with those minutes in a um wonderful way so thank you (.) OK are we done?
45. Joy [Yes]
46. Cath [I'd we-] just like to say to Fran I've actually um spent about 15 years in community meetings from various sides working for the state government and um I've had some community meetings that used to take 3 hours to do the minutes and go till midnight or 1 o'clock in the morning when they started at 5 and um you've kept us on time and to the point and moved us along and kept us to the point so really, thank you for that because sometimes it's very difficult and and you've really been able to resolve and er move things forward in in a very efficient fashion. Um to the community members I think some of the groups I've been involved with um haven't sometimes made much of an impact on what's been built but this group in particular. I think um at one stage we did draw up a list of the changes that have been made and I think I I I I it would er be a daunting task to attempt to update that list to all the changes that have been made because of the suggestions and input of this group so I think it's been FANTASTIC to have that input and, and to have that valuable time that everyone's committed to around all their other activities in their lives and their families and their jobs and and the state government really appreciates that input. Um to Velcon um there's been times when this (.) when at, this

meeting we've had er six or seven members of Velcon's team present at the meeting which has been almost unprecedented and that input I think has really assisted in resolving issues very quickly and getting responses back to the community members and to you Fran on time. But I suppose to, to Ivor I say that out of all the companies I've worked with over the years you are the only CEO who has EVER come to any community meetings and you've consistently come to ALL of the meetings we have and that's unprecedented. So your interest and involvement in the community is, is commendable

47. Fran Alright would anyone else like to say anything before we move on?  
(.)Brian you look like you're
48. Brian um um I [um]
49. Fran [thinking?]
50. Brian well the only thing is um er when you are doing a job and er you want to get stuck into it and you've got to come along here and er this is, this is a model for making a better outcome it sounds like it this um despite the pain.
51. All ((general laughter))
52. Mary Well I think it has a lot to do with the fact that the er (.) um the meetings have been meetings of activists (.) without passive riders without blocking outists and (.h) in large part it has been due to you Fran (.h) moving things along. to Sam for the parts that they've played in ensuring that the community entry to Velcon has always been available and having replies even although sometimes it's been very difficult to actually negotiate because of the time frames that have been put on the community members to meet and to read those big documents but we really did take it very seriously bec:ause (.) we wanted this project and we wanted (.) a product which was good and we could see Velcon was going to was capable of doing this and we wanted to s- walk beside them and um help it and then along came you Ivor helping us to (.) um take the next step so it really has been one of those fine experiences of (.h)activists all together and I'm sure that that's why this parti:cular community liaison group has worked Ah and of course Joy is the most wonderful scribe and the most PATIENT person in the world which you don't know about because you don't know that Joy first of all will listen to us when we come to her, with all of our comments on a document and she will then say well do you want to word it in this way? she'll then get back in touch with us, on the telephone or on the computer (.h)and say well just tell me? what is the point you are making? now make it a bit clearer here and (.h)do I er want it moved around? so you know she really has the patience of JOB when it comes to (.h) ensuring that (.h) some er, er, er presentation that's to be made by the community is going to be made with the utmost clarity and er making the points we want to make and asking if you'll please listen to us and, and please take these on board and I think that's one of the reasons why we

probably have had such a good relationship because instead of just a (.h) couple of scrappy bits of paper where we say DON'T LIKE IT and being negative we've tried to be constructive at the same time as saying we don't like it you know what would be an option? =

53. Cath = but, but more than that often in, from other community feedback um processes you get a lot of conflicting comments and that role that Joy played in co-ordinating the comments (.h)made, made it easier for the state government and Velcon to respond to issues because we all, we had a united view from the community members about what was wanted, and what, what the issues were and it wasn't just about issues. there was a big focus on outcomes and an emphasis on achieving the appropriate outcomes and that really helps us because a lot of the time we get a lot of issues but there isn't many outcomes coming through from that and that's greatly appreciated.
54. Joy think that was because (.) we chose to meet sometimes=
55. Mary = outside =
56. Joy = more than once until we found consensus  
and where we couldn't find consensus we said so =
57. Mary = yes um =
58. Joy = but often we found consensus because people who who had views when they heard, when they got more information, when lots of people, things shifted until we had a consensus and that was not an easy process. but that probably meant in those early days, that first two years we spent (.) more time in meeting outside=
59. Mary = oh definitely =
60. Joy = than we spent here and I think that, that's why we were able to be A community liaison GRO:UP instead of a disparate group of people and I think that one of the things perhaps it, that Velcon and state governments should think about when they're selecting people to go on these groups in the future (.)is that they should look for people who have a GENUINE interest and who UNDERSTAND when they do it that there are HUGE amounts of documents to read and who are prepared it's not just a matter of coming along to a meeting once a month.
61. Sam That's why we thankfully ended up with all of you because that was one of the very things we did look at i- in the documentation that went out.
62. Joy [Yep]
63. Sam [4 years ago]
64. Joy but, but in the beginning. in the beginning there was great prejudice about people who were on the Action group
65. Fran Not any more Joy =

66. Joy = No no but there was in the beginning but what, what people didn't realise was that that group represents the whole community and THEY were the people who were prepared to be committed having met already for 8, 6 years or something before you began and so prejudice about groups is not a good thing either you know having preconceived notions about what you'll get out of (.) such people who belong to a group =
67. Fran = I I think you're exactly right because it's all about the ability to collaborate and also to (.) try to hold an open mind even though you might have a position and to try to collaborate around interests and and you know common outcomes um (.) er cos if you hold a position that's all it will ever be and it won't go anywhere and er I think that um I think the fact that you really did have a mutual purpose, a common goal that that really enabled this group to actually achieve what it has achieved. Now um I'm just aware of the time and, and I think that I would like to um do the construction update.

## Appendix 5: Final Ethics Approval Letter



18 July 2008

Ms Heather Jackson  
Department of Linguistics  
Macquarie University  
NSW 2109

Reference: HE27JUN2008-D05928L&P

Dear Ms Jackson,

### FINAL APPROVAL

*Title of project: "The Negotiation and Construction of Trust in Business Discourse"*

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your responses have addressed the issues raised by the Division of Linguistics and Psychology Sub-Committee of the Ethics Review Committee (Human Research) and you may now proceed with your research.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. Approval will be for a period of twelve (12) months. At the end of this period, if the project has been completed, abandoned, discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are required to submit a Final Report on the project. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. The Final Report is available at: [http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/forms)
2. However, at the end of the 12 month period if the project is still current you should instead submit an application for renewal of the approval if the project has run for less than five (5) years. This form is available at [http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/forms). If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report (see Point 1 above) and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).
3. Please remember the Committee must be notified of any alteration to the project.
4. You must notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
5. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University  
[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics/policy](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/policy)

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ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (HUMAN RESEARCH)  
LEVEL 3, RESEARCH HUB, BUILDING CSC  
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY  
NSW, 2109 AUSTRALIA

Ethics Secretariat: Ph: (02) 9850 6848 Fax: (02) 9850 4465 E-mail: [ethics.secretariat@vc.mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics.secretariat@vc.mq.edu.au)  
[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics)

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is **your responsibility** to provide Macquarie University's Research Grants Officer with a copy of this letter as soon as possible. The Research Grants Officer will not inform external funding agencies that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Officer has received a copy of this final approval letter.

Yours sincerely



**# Mr Colm Halbert**  
Chair, Division of Linguistics and Psychology Sub-Committee to the Ethics Review Committee  
(Human Research)  
Acting Associate Dean of Research

Cc: Dr Alan Jones, Department of Linguistics  
Dr Christopher N. Candlin, Department of Linguistics

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