

**A proposal to investigate the role of interim or other atypical management in the transformation of lean organisations in response to market conditions.**

**Document 1 Definition and Mapping of Research Questions**

**In part fulfilment of the requirements of Nottingham Business School in pursuance of an award of the degree of Doctor of Business Administration**

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## **Introduction**

This paper outlines a proposal the objective of which is to understand the role of atypical management in the transformation of lean organisations in response to market conditions.

Borrowing from the literature on atypical employment, atypical management is equated with managers who are hired to achieve a particular outcome through non-standard employment arrangements. Employment is used here in the non-technical sense to mean engaged by an organisation. The working definition of atypical management, set out below, is broad enough to include interim managers and consultants, though the primary focus of the proposal will be the role of the interim management. The inclusion of consultants will enable the enquiry to extend to include the reasons why an employer engages an interim manager as opposed to a consulting firm or a consultancy in preference to an interim manager.

The working definition of an atypical manager could also incorporate certain of the arrangements that are used for the provision of non-executive directors. Indeed, a growing number of professional, interim managers either hold or aspire to such appointments. However, the proposal is concerned with atypical managers engaged in business transformation and my current thinking is that this focus will exclude most non-executive directors.

Recent years have seen significant growth in the use of outsourcing to provide services to organisations. The outsourcing market has matured from simple arrangement whereby, e.g., information system services are provided under contract

to embrace the outsourcing of business processes and, the research of Taylor et al shows, the management of innovation (Taylor, Quintas et al. 2000.; Taylor, Quintas et al. 2000.). Outsourcing is a form of atypical employment but outsourcing strategies and their impact on an organisation would be an extensive study in itself. Consequently, whilst it is likely that issues relating to outsourcing will arise during the course of the proposed research, it is not a focus area of this study.

This proposal explores the relationship between lean organisations and the concept of the flexible firm and draws the preliminary conclusion that the essence of a flexible firm is that it adopts what Bryson (1999.p. 83) describes as a ‘tight’ business model, in effect, creating a rigid, inflexible, organisational structure, in pursuit of an optimal configuration. However, the acquisition of such a configuration is an elusive goal. Therefore lean organisations should be defined as to include those organisations that have a strategy intended to achieve that outcome.

The hypothesis underlying the proposal is that lean organisations face difficulties in maintaining alignment to an ever changing and complex external environment within which they must in the private sector achieve a competitive advantage and in the public and not for profit sectors satisfy their mandate. One answer to that difficulty is to use atypical management. That use may enable an organisation to staff for an average demand, meeting peaks of demand and troughs through atypical employment or, the primary focus of this proposal, may be part of a consciously chosen strategy to use atypical management to provide innovation and change skills rather than to maintain such skills in house. Of course the proposed research may demonstrate that the growth in the use of atypical management is not a planned outcome at all but the unplanned consequence of the decision to adopt lean, process driven, strategies, or as

an externality to other policies, downsizing comes to mind, adopted to meet stakeholder expectations or environmental conditions.

All organisations endure change, but the proposal distinguishes between change and transformation. Adopting Aldrich's (1999.) typology, transformation is a major or substantial change to an organisation. Although there is room for argument as to whether a particular change is a transformation, the definition is itself subjective; the concern here is with the organisation's view of its proposed change. An organisation will determine whether it is faced with change or transformation having regard to whether the change involves the entire organisation or commits a significant set of an organisation's resource.

Although the flexible firm literature is extensive there is relatively little literature on interim management, the role of interim management in business transformation or the process by which employers chose between the use of interim management and consultancy services. Consequently the proposal will be of interest to a number of communities, including:-

- The academy,
- Interim managers and their professional associations,
- Interim management intermediaries and agents,
- Actual and potential employer's of interim managers,
- Consultancy firms,
- Policy makers and regulators.

It is intended that tangible outcomes from the proposed research should include:

- A competency model for interim managers engaged in business transformation and change.
- An understanding of the criteria by which interim managers are selected in preference to other types of atypical management, and in particular consultancy services.
- An understanding of the informal, or psychological contract, implied in an interim management engagement.
- An understanding of some of the key drivers behind the use of interim management.

Having outlined the key aspects of the proposal the rest of this paper is organised in the following sections:

- Section 2 discusses the organisational and management support, which will be available for the proposed research.
- Section 3 outlines my preliminary thoughts on key management problems that underpin the central hypothesis of the proposal. To recap, that hypothesis is that lean organisations have difficulties when faced with the need to change and that they address those difficulties through the use of atypical management. Firstly this section establishes a context within the resource-based view of strategy. The section then goes on to discuss whether the flexible firm of the literature is in fact flexible. The final part of this section sets out some preliminary thoughts on atypical management and in so doing seeks to come to a working definition for use in the forthcoming research.
- Section 4 identifies the academic fields that appear relevant to the proposal.

- Section 5 Outlines the research issues and objectives of each of documents 2, 3 and 4, and in doing so establishes the scope of each module.
- Section 6 outlines the research plans and methods that will be adopted.
- Section 7 discusses the ethics of the research.
- Section 8 summarises the personal and research outcomes expected to be derived from the proposed research.

## **Section 2: Organisational and management context**

I have worked for the last ten years as an interim manager, predominantly, but not exclusively, in the field of change within Information Systems Departments of large blue chip corporations. Within that role my focus has been the improvement of the ways in which those departments delivery IS services and projects. Other roles have involved working for the ‘business’ in implementing change projects that have a significant technical content. Although these roles sound technical in nature my skill set is not ‘IS technical’ rather it is founded on experience of managing professionals and the delivery of professional services. Until 1994 I practiced as a solicitor and held a number of managerial appointments within a law firm cumulating in my appointment as managing partner. My legal specialisation was engineering law and I was active on the professional lecture circuit in relation both to why projects fail and the management and delivery of professional services.

One consequence of my employment status is that the only organisational and management support on which I may count is that which I provide myself. The lack of temporal relationship (this kind of relationship will be discussed below) with an organisation has affected my plans for the research elements of this proposal.

My initial intention was to use my assignments to provide research material.

Reflections on the issues involved in conducting research within the DBA programme suggest that this initial thought is impracticable. There would have been no guarantee that the assignment on which I was engaged at any particular time would coincide with the issues to be addressed by my research proposal. Moreover, the ethics of research require that those who are subject to research give their consent to the enquiry. Within the context of assignment based research there would be a very real risk of that consent being withheld.

I anticipate using my interim management network and my professional associations to build a reasonable research cohort for Document 3, an enquiry into the competencies skills and motivation of interim managers. The research cohort for Document 4, which seeks to understand, *inter alia*, why employers use interim managers, may prove to be a greater problem. That cohort will comprise companies or organisations that have extensive experience of the use of interim managers and or consultants in change programmes. In fact in relation to certain aspects of the proposal it would be helpful for them to have had experience of both interim managers and consultants and to have considered reasons why they chose one over the other in any particular case. I am wary of potential bias if the cohort used in the research for Document 4 nominates the research cohort for document 4, but I have not yet developed an alternative strategy.

At the time of writing, the first quarter of 2003, the interim market appears to be in free fall. The market abounds with anecdotal stories, of, variously 300 applications for a job, or a 1 in 50 chance of getting a job, of plummeting rates, of agencies going under, of mass lay off by consulting firms, whose former employees seek work in



the interim market, and of encroachment of consultancy firms into the traditional territory of the interim manager. This market instability may impact on the work set out in the proposal in numerous ways, not the least of which might be that of personal financial constraint.

### **Section 3: Management problems and issues description.**

#### ***Introduction***

There are two assumptions explicitly made in this proposal. The first of those assumptions is that organisations must change to maintain alignment with their environment. That assumption will not be explored further, but the process by which organisations plan for change will be addressed to give context to the concept of the lean organisation. Having established that context, the idea of the lean organisation will be developed. It will be argued that a lean organisation inhibits its ability to change, that the strategies that it has adopted potentially reduce its flexibility. That discussion will lead to consideration of Atkinson's concept of the flexible firm. The second assumption of the proposal is that an answer to the inflexibility of the lean organisation is the use of atypical management. This paper will not address that issue directly, it is central to the ongoing research, but the concept of atypical management will be outlined.

#### ***Context***

There are two broad churches within the field of Organisational Strategy; prescriptive strategy, which involves a structured strategic planning system; and the emergent process which relies on developing strategies whose final outcome is not known ((Lynch 2000.)). The emergent school is not as 'off the wall' as my brief summary

might suggest. Within its scope it acknowledges the complexity and unpredictability of the environment, the need to react to unpredictable market conditions to ensure organisational survival, and the impact of the ability motivation, politics, culture and desires of people within an organisation to influence the evolution of a pattern of activity through experimentation and learning.

Despite the best efforts of writers such as Pettigrew (1985.) Johnson (1986.) and Mintzberg (1990.) to focus on people as a key element of strategy the dominant paradigm within strategic management at the time of writing lies within the prescriptive school. That paradigm summarised and critique by Conner ( 2002.) is the resource based view of strategy. Organisations plan to configure the resources which they have, or which they can reasonably expect to obtain, in such a way as enables them to build a strategy that satisfies the key success factors within their market in a way that gives them a competitive advantage. The model is readily flexed to accommodate the public sector by substituting mandate for key success factors, and best value for competitive advantage. Essentially this is a top down example of managerialism (Watson 2002.pp. 52–3) derived from what Watson (ibid ) has called managism, the belief, in Watson's words '...that there is a distinctive managerial experience based on a body of objective management knowledge which managers should apply to enable them rationally to design, maintain and drive operational systems in the same way that expert engineers design, maintain and drive machines.'

The resource-based view emphasises the difference between resources that are available to any organisation and those that are special and which are possible unique to the organisation. The latter resources give sustainable competitive advantage. The

thinking implicit in the resource-based view can readily be extended to encompass lean organisations and will be considered again in looking at the flexible firm.

### ***Lean organisations***

It has been said that a managerialist perspective on organisational behaviour encourages a focus on current fashion trends in management (Huczynski and Buchanan 2001.p. 3). Whether or not that is case the current rhetoric of shareholder value places managers under pressure to focus on short-term returns. Managers subject to this kind of pressure adopt strategies consistent with Beer and Nohria's (2000.) Theory E. Theory E is concerned with hard economic returns and is characterised by the heavy use of economic incentives, drastic layoffs, downsizing and restructuring (Beer and Nohria 2000.). Beer and Nohria (ibid) argue that Theory E change strategies are more common than Theory O, incremental change through the development of corporate cultural and human capability, because financial markets are impatient for rapid turnaround and improvement.

The choice between Theory E and Theory O has implications for flexibility. The development of individuals explicit in the adoption of Theory O fits the kind of indirect job control and high trusts relationships advocated in much of modern strategic human resourcing theory. The resulting flexibility will give long-term adaptability (Watson 2002.p. 313). Conversely, Theory E is targeted at short-term flexibility through job design policies and processes that allow staff to be easily recruited and trained and just as easily laid of if the need arises. Theory E emphasises the need to design an organisation which functions, primarily through the utilisation of generic skills

Over the last thirty years there has been a major debate about the relationship between strategy and structure, and, since the 1980s, a continuing debate about the ability of organisations to change their style and culture. The central issue of the debate has been around coordination, should organisations be coordinated through vertical, hierarchical, structures, or, taking advantage of advances in information technology, should they adopt horizontal, flat structures. Pragmatically, and perhaps because of the enduring nature of hierarchies (as to which see Leavitt 2003.) there is evidence to suggest that modern organisations adopt neither extreme but organise themselves within a hybrid structure (Day 1999.). This debate is far from sterile as in seeking to combine current technological possibilities with current management thinking organisations are seeking the holy grail of optimal configuration.

Two common strategies to achieve that elusive optimal configuration are lean production, sometimes described as ‘lean thinking’ (Lynch 2000.p. 414) and business process reengineering. Watson (2002.p. 314) describes lean production as the:-

‘...combining...of teamworking with automated technologies [*wherein workers*] are required both to initiate “continuous improvements” in quality and to ensure that every task is “got right first time” and completed to a demanding “just-in-time” schedule.’

And goes on to define business process reengineering as the:-

‘...restructuring of an organisation to focus on business processes rather than business functions [*by the use of*] advanced management control information technologies...together with team working and employee “empowerment.”’

The technical changes resulting from either approach are biased towards capital expenditure and the saving of labour costs. In consequence the adoption of an operational strategy that approximates either concept will have important implications for the adopting organisation's human resource strategy, and the ability to seek long-term flexibility through adoption of Theory O. They are, effectively, operational examples of Theory E.

It is axiomatic that flexibility is a core requirement of organisations that function in a rapidly changing environment. Although supporters of lean manufacturing and business process reengineering propose solutions (In the case of BPR see Hammond and Champy 1993. cited in ; Huczynski and Buchanan 2001.) the process of reengineering amounts to a traumatic amputation of the organisational from the organisational context described by Pettigrew (1973.; 1985.; 1987.; 1988.), in favour of 'best practice' borne of managism. Moreover, the Taylorist approach to work implicit in reengineering tends towards process fragmentation wherein although the processes are aligned, individual staff are only concerned with the part of the process with which they are directly concerned and may have no knowledge of, or interest in, elements of the process up or down stream of them (Huczynski and Buchanan 2001.p. 615). Finally, the removal of middle management, euphemistical referred to in the literature as delayering, is detrimental to the kind of upwards communication advocated by Drucker (1989.p. 196). The result of all these changes is a tendency to take employees out of the process of management and to place that management into the hands of a technocratic core. Despite the theories of lean manufacturer and business process reengineering proclaiming an accommodation with modern notions of human resource management, the reality of implementation suggest a difficult, post

change, environment in which those notions struggle to flourish.

There is a logic to process fragmentation, with its overtones of scientific management, which suggests a redistribution of work between core workers, who have special skills which are possible unique to the organisation, the key resources within the resource-based view of the firm, and peripheral workers, those who operate the fragmented processes, who have generic skills which are readily sourced in the market. This thought leads to consideration of the concept of the flexible firm.

### ***Atkinson's concept of the flexible firm***

Introduced into the lexicon of human resource strategy by Atkinson (Atkinson 1984.; Atkinson and Meager 1986.; summarised in Bryson 1999.), the flexible firm concept captures the notion that a firm could approach its human resource strategy by considering its workforce within three sets or groups. The first set is comprised of core workers. Core workers form the primary job market. They enjoy employment security, are well paid, and are involved in activities which are unique to their employer or which give their organisation its distinctive flavour (Torrington, Hall et al. 2002.p. 142). Although Bryson (1999.p. 66) ascribes functional flexibility to core workers, the better view is that core workers have flexibility within their designated task (Torrington, Hall et al. 2002.p. 142), reserving the expression *functional flexibility* to describe either horizontal flexibility, the ability to multitask, or vertical flexibility, the ability to carry out work formerly carried out by colleagues either higher or lower in the organisational hierarchy (Torrington, Hall et al. 2002.p. 144). Vertical and horizontal flexibility are characteristics of business process engineering.

Those who are not core workers are peripheral workers. Peripheral workers sub-

divide into two groups those who, if they are skilled at all, have generic skills that can be readily sourced from the market, and a second group of generically skilled workers who are distinguishable from the first set by their non-standard or atypical terms of employment. This latter group of peripheral workers acts as a breakwater, absorbing the first demand for flexibility when the need arises.

There are numerous critics of this approach to flexibility (See, e.g Bryson 1999.pp. 67–69 and ; Torrington, Hall et al. 2002.p.145), but *a priori* a flexibly HR strategy underpins an operational strategy which can utilise its perceived benefits. Technical changes biased towards capital expenditure and the saving of labour costs, such as those introduced by lean manufacturing or business process engineering, suggest that routines and processes become embedded, hardwired, into the organisation as the organisation seeks to optimise its return on investment. The consequent rise in fixed costs makes it difficult to lay peripheral workers off whilst continuing a policy of investment optimisation.

To compound the difficulty of management there is evidence to suggest even where behavioural compliance is achieved, underlying assumptions and beliefs remain intact (see Salaman 1997.pp. 264–67). Moreover, for reasons which go beyond the scope of this paper Bryson (1999.p. 83) citing Walby (1989.), Geary (1992.) and (Legge 1995.) suggests that so called flexible forms of employment actually create rigidities, both intra-organisation and in the wider employment market.

The paradox thus presented is that organisations that seek optimal configuration adopt what Bryson (1999.p. 83) describes as a tight model which is neither flexible nor responsive to changes in the market place. I would go further and describe the design

criteria for that model as meeting the environmental conditions that existed at its conception. Lean organisations may espouse flexibly human resource policies but they are not, as organisations, flexible.

Huczynski and Buchanan (2001.p. 616) suggest that, despite use of project managers and external consultants, many functional managers are also change agents. They advocate (ibid p. 594) that organisations must respond rapidly to external change, that the necessary internal restructuring is likely to be strategic, and that there is a need to break the ‘rigid, autocratic, bureaucratic approach to organisation and management.’ Finally on this topic they conclude that the new organisational framework should emphasise flexibility, creativity and participation.

I have argued that lean organisations have adopted a new rigidity in place of the old vertical structure. It does not seem to me to matter that the rigidity is a creature of a horizontal structure save to the extent that the structure has been delayed. Process owners who by virtue of their position have only a limited organisational view have replaced experienced managers who might have sensed the need for change and who had a holistic view of the organisation. Moreover, lean organisations encourage separation between managers and the managed. In those circumstances who remains to sense the need to change, to warn of its need and to implement it when required?

### ***Atypical management***

In my work I will distinguish between management and atypical management by reference to their employment conditions. Whilst the precise definition will be worked up during the preparation of Module 2, my working definition of atypical management owes much to Harvey’s temporal perspective (Harvey 1999.). Watson



(2002.p. 397) uses the terms 'employed' or 'hired' to distinguish between an employee relationship and a market relationship. The employed group enjoy, at least potentially, a long-term relationship with their employer. The hired group's expectation is that the assignment will be relatively short term and the relationship will frequently be transactional, in the sense that the manager, or management group, has been hired to achieve a particular outcome, the completion of which, at least in regard to that transaction, establishes the temporal limit to the relationship. From the employer's perspective the two arrangements can be thought of as the products of pursuing a 'relationship or employment HR sub-strategy through which employees are recruited and trained and a 'transitional or market HR strategy' through which hires are sourced' (Watson 2002.p. 398).

My working definition of atypical management is sufficiently wide to include interim managers and consultants. My primary focus will be the role of interim managers in change management, but I will address the question why do organisations favour one group over another. This issue may become more complex in current market conditions as the boundary between the two groups, at least anecdotally, is becoming blurred, with interim managers, often sponsored by interim management agencies, joining together to tender for 'consultancy' work and Consultancy firms increasingly willing to 'body shop', the act of placing individual consultants into client companies, to fulfil what appears to be an interim role.

#### **Section 4: Academic fields relevant to the proposal.**

The research issues to be investigated are interdisciplinary. In defining and mapping the research questions considerable reliance has been placed on the literature of organisational behaviour, strategic human resourcing, and elements of the literature

on the flexible firm. In addition literature from the strategic management field, social policy and sociology has been considered.

It is likely that those fields will remain relevant in the ongoing research. My preliminary view of the additional literature requirements for each of the forthcoming documents is:-

### ***Document 2***

The three strands of literature that will be reviewed for the purposes of Document 2 are discussed below in Section 5 where the scope and extent of the literature review is outlined.

### ***Document 3***

My current thinking in relation to Document 3 is that I will adopt a Boyatzis' personal characteristic approach to management competence (Boyatzis 1982.). However, I need to update myself in relation to the literature in this field. In addition the document requires a specific understanding of the literature of psychological contracts.

Document 2 will report on the ethnographic research carried out during the period of Module 2. I will need to consider the literature in relation to ethnographic research as it relates to project design, data analysis and data collection, including interviewing and observation. My starting point for that review is Atkinson (1995.), *Ethnographic Principles in Practice*, May (1997.) *Social Research: Issues and Process*, and Silverman (1993.) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*.

#### ***Document 4***

This document will draw on the thematic and qualitative research undertaken for Documents 2 and 3. Additionally I will need to consider the literature in relation to structured research methods in relation to project design, data analysis and data collection.

#### ***Document 5***

This document will integrate the theory and research from the previous documents

### **Section 5: The research issues, objectives and scope**

#### ***Document 2: The literature review***

The literature relating to the flexible firm is immense. Consequently, it is proposed that the literature review should be focused on key issues that have been identified as pertinent to the outcome of the proposed research. Three strands within the literature have been identified as being relevant. The first strand will summarise the evidence of growth of flexible employment practices in the European Community generally, but specifically in the United Kingdom and to seek to identify any literature within that stand which is specifically concerned with the role and function of atypical management. Much of that literature appears to be concerned with the tracking and recording of the growth of atypical employment (by way of example Hunter, McGregor et al. 1993.; Brewster and Hegewisch 1994.; Brewster, Mayne et al. 1997.; Casey, Metcalf et al. 1997.; Dex and McCulloch 1997.; Felstead and Jewson 1999.), tends to take a sociological perspective (e.g Felstead and Jewson 1999.), or a social policy position in relation to employment laws (e.g Burchell, Deakin et al. 1999.). Those perspectives are entirely legitimate in themselves but only partially advance the

agenda of this proposal. Secondly, the proposed review will investigate the literature pertinent to the use of atypical management in business transformation and change. Finally, the review will look at the drivers behind the use of atypical management but will within this stand concentrate on drivers derived from regulatory pressure and the desire to achieve financial flexibility, defined by (Bryson 1999.) as the ability to adjust remuneration costs both up and down. Bryson takes an employees perspective in his work and a managerial perspective might flex that definition to include wage costs.

### ***Document 3: Ethnographic research***

The objectives of the research are to obtain a better understanding of the people specification of an interim manager engaged in business transformation. The final formulation of the research questions will be informed by input from the literature review. Document 3 will use ethnographic research to address the following questions:-

- What are the competencies of interim managers engaged in business transformation?
- What are the drivers to entry to work as an interim manager?
- What are the attributes of an interim managers physiological contract with his employer?
- Why do employers employ interim managers generally, and instead of consultants?

### ***Document 4: Structured Research***

The objective of document 4 is to gain an understanding of how lean organisations

manage significant change, how they select help in managing that change and the drivers behind the use of interim management. Again, the final research questions will be informed by the literature review. The preliminary research questions are:-

- How do lean organisations manage significant business change?
- What are the factors or variables that influence selection between different atypical management offers, and in particular, between interim managers and consultants?
- To what extent is the use of interim management driven by regulatory issues and/or the desire to achieve financial flexibility?

### ***Document 5: The thesis***

This document will attempt to reconcile the outputs from Modules 3 and 4 by establishing a competency model for interim managers engaged in Business Transformation. It will further seek to understand the informal contract between interim managers and employers and whether the formal and informal arrangements for engagements accommodate both parties objectives.

## **Section 6: Research Plans and Methods**

Remenyi, Williams *et al* (1998.) suggests an eight stage research process. That process is:-

- Reviewing the literature
- Formalising a research question
- Establishing the methodology
- Collecting the evidence

- Analysing the evidence
- Developing the conclusions
- Understanding the limitations of the Research
- Producing management guidelines or recommendations

Given the structure of the Nottingham Business Schools DBA course that process will be followed, with minor modifications, iteratively, through the preparations of Documents 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The literature review (Document 2) is planned to be a critical review of the three core stands of the literature outlined in section 5 of this proposal. In reviewing the literature of the growth of the use of atypical management it is expected to show that such growth has taken place, to identify the causation of that growth and to gain an understanding of why individuals are willing to undertake atypical employment. The second strand of the research will show the extent to which, in fact, the literature shows the involvement of atypical management in change. Both strands will inform the research to be undertaken in relation to Documents 3 and 4 and, to the extent that it does not validate the research questions suggested by this document, will assist in the refining, modification or replacement of those questions so that the primary research topic may be pursued.

The third strand is concerned with the identification of two preliminary causes identified for the growth in the atypical management market that the proposal asserts has taken place. These causes have been preselected for consideration in depth as it is envisaged that they to be referenced by the research cohorts for both documents 3 and

4.

An important aspect of the literature review is to move the research base more firmly into recently published, refereed, academic journals and to gain a fully understanding of key debates and issues within the relevant literature.

It is a requirement that Document 3 should be an interactive report of a piece of ethnographic research. My proposal for this research is set out in Section 5 (above). My research cohorts are a set of interim managers (for Document 3) and a set of employers of atypical management (Document 4). I have chosen the interim manager set for my ethnographic research. I have chosen a phenomenological approach to this aspect of my research because I feel that a positivist approach will only elicit surface answers to the enquiry and would, consequently, reduces the potential for understanding.

The initial research for document 3 will be by semi-structured interview, but I have a Foucaultian interest in contingency, discourse and stories and it is anticipated that further meetings to try and capture stories of particular assignments will follow in some cases.

I have decided to use semi-structured interviews to maintain a boundary around the discussion, to ensure that similar information sets are gleaned from each interview, and to enable comparisons to be made during the analysis stage. Should the opportunity arise, in the context of an assignment in an organisation that employs a number of interim managers, I will use direct observation of working Interim Managers to validate how they say they behave in interview.

The required schema imposes a positivist, structured, piece of research to underpin Document 4. Given a free choice, and for the reasons discussed in relation to Document 3, I would not take that route for Document 4. However, the virtue in the choice is that what the research may lack in depth in can compensate for in breadth. By this stage the research will have been informed by the literature review and the output of document 3. The conjecture, which will be tested, will be validated by that infusion but my present thoughts are summarised in Section 5. The conjecture will be tested through passive observation (As to which see Remenyi, Williams et al. 1998.pp. 73–91) using a questionnaire as a measuring instrument.

An important issue that has yet to be resolved is the issue of sample. Taylor Quintas et al (2000.p. 32) identify the danger of universal generalisations derived from cross sector studies, and suggest that further studies, in their case on the relationship between employment policies and innovation, be undertaken within individual sectors. The likelihood exists that the use of atypical management in changing lean organisations will vary by sector. In itself that would be an interesting research outcome, but I suspect that a sector focus will be more easily contained within the boundary of the envisaged course of study.

The thesis (Document 5) will draw together the work from the previous documents. It is proposed that the competency model will be tested through either formal focus group drawn from both interim managers and the employers of interim managers.

## **Section 7: Ethical and political issues**

I am a professional interim manager working in the field of change management who is self-sponsored. The potential for bias exists in view of my professional work, but



not the potential for undue influence that might otherwise have arisen from a sponsored arrangement.

I will have to negotiate access to each of my research cohorts. In relation to the interim management cohort I must take care, and be able to demonstrate that, although I will use my network to populate the cohort, my criteria for including colleagues is not that their views accord with mine. I will whenever possible invite wide participation in the cohort by, for example, seeking nominations at network meetings. Similar considerations apply to the employer cohort for document 4, although in this case my network will be insufficient of itself to populate the cohort.

I will need to treat the evidence even handed way, and in particular should not favour evidence which favours any preconception I may have formed or discard any information which is discordant with that preconception.

It is important that participants in the research participate have given informed consent to their involvement. It will be equally important that individual participants will not be identifiable from the published documentation. In this regard particular care will need to be taken in relation to the interim management cohort.

It is not anticipated that the research will involve institutions where the conduct of research is subject to the sanction of an Ethical Committee or Board. However, good practice demands an ethical approach to the work and the advice of my supervisors will be sought and observed at all material times.

## **Section 8: Outcomes**

The personal outcomes from the proposed research are summarised as follows:

I will have experience of planning a detailed piece of research and of considering how that research will be conducted and supported.

I will be able to take construct an academic argument through critical review of the literature and the development of conceptual frameworks. In addition I will have developed a doctoral 'voice' in my written work, have learned to use the tools and techniques of scholarship, have learned to analyse the rhetorical methods in pieces of academic writing, have identified potential and political hazards in a research proposal and to have engaged in a structured ethical debate.

I will have learned and practiced skills in social research in a business context using both positivist and phenomenology methods within a conjecture informed by academic research.

I will have gain post-graduate research qualification in respect of a self-selected piece of research that is of interest to the wider community and will have contributed to the academic and professional literature in relation to that research.

Finally, I will have completed a significant piece of personal development that will have a significant influence in my professional career.

The professional outcomes from this research will include:-

- A competency model for interim managers engaged in business transformation and change.

- A publishable understanding of the criteria by which interim managers are selected in preference to other types of atypical management, and in particular consultancy services.
- A publishable understanding of the informal, or psychological contract, implied in an interim management engagement.
- A publishable understanding of some of the key drivers behind the use of interim management.

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## **Document 2**

### **Literature Review**

# **What in the World of Work is Going On?**

Revised Submission

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the Doctorate in Business Administration degree**

## **Abstract**

This paper describes the interim management market and offers a hypothesis of the characteristics of the interim managers who work within it. The paper establishes a context for that market by drawing on the history of the development of the employment market and employment relations, and in particular has outlined the development, purpose and eventual decline of the internal labour market. In doing so the contingencies have been established which, it is hypothesized, led to experienced managers embarking on an independent career.

In addition it is shown that the “atypical” employment market is multi segmented and it has been argued, within the segmentation, that interim managers can be separated from other professionals who work on temporary engagements by the nature of their skills



# 1 Introduction

The literature strongly reflects an interest in flexible working. Purcell and Purcell (1998) note an evolutionary trend in human resource management to utilise contingent forms of work (Coyle-Shapiro *et al.*, 2002; Feltham *et al.*, 1999; Inkson *et al.*, 2001; Storey *et al.*, 2002; Uzzi *et al.*, 1998), particularly in large organisations (Feltham *et al.*, 1999) and in the public sector (Coyle-Shapiro *et al.*, 2002) where the common sense expectation would lead to an assumption of a bureaucratic control system built around the idea of the internal labour market (Edwards, 1979). Kanter (1989) suggests that we are witnessing a transition from the traditional bureaucratic career to a more professional and entrepreneurial type of career (Mallon, 1998). Arthur and Rousseau (1996) write of boundaryless careers and Handy (1994) of the portfolio career.

What is distinctive about the workers described by Kanter (1989), Arthur and Rousseau (1996), Mallon (1998) and Albert and Bradley (1997) *et al* is the assumption of expertise and the abandonment of traditional work forms by those experts in favour of contingent employment

A hurdle which must be overcome in discussing atypical employment is that there is no official, or authoritative, definition of 'standard' or 'typical' employment (Rosenberg *et al.*, 1999). Despite the recognition of flexible working as an important phenomenon (Storey *et al.*, 2002), the terminology applied to the subject varies considerably. 'Flexibility' is commonly used in the UK. The European Commission prefer the term 'atypical work'. US commentators describe the kind of work as 'contingent', whilst others, reflecting the employee relations perspective discussed later prefer the term 'insecure work'. Each of these terms are value laden, but are linked by the idea that they describe employment outside the discourse of the internal labour market within which employers and employees had an expectation of longevity of employment and share a perception of what each contributes to the bargain of employment.

An understanding of the temporary employment sector is made more complicated by the way in which official statistics are collected, and by confusion between different, non-standard types of employment resourcing (Purcell *et al.*, 1998). The differences between the various types of atypical employment are impossible to monitor in national statistics (ibid).

Interim managers are a group of workers within the atypical employment market. The size of that market segment will be shown to be uncertain, nor is there any certainty about the characteristics of the “typical” interim manager. This paper develops a hypothesis that interim managers are distinguishable from other professional temporary staff by the nature of their skills. It also considers the creation of the interim management market through consideration of the contingencies which created the environment in which the market developed and continues to grow.

The paper is structured in the following way. Section 2 sets out key conceptual issues. Section 3 first describes the interim management market and then interim managers. Section 4 challenges the idea that full time work within a hierarchy is prototypical except in the most limited of circumstances. Section 5 describes one of those circumstances, the internal labour market. The section outlines why that model of employment was adopted, what the objectives in adopting it were, the nature of the employment bargain within its boundaries, and some of the reasons for its eventual decline. Section 6 develops an idea first canvassed in section 3 that there is a need to segment the atypical labour market. It does this through consideration of key labour market segmentation theory, onto which is imposed Blackler’s (1995) typology of knowledge. Section 7 considers insecurity. Section 8, reviews career development and employability, and section 9 the role of agencies in the market for expert contingent workers.

## 2 Conceptual issues

This section outlines two key conceptual issues which have informed this paper. The first is drawn from Michael Foucault's work on discourse, the second from new institutional economics.

### 2.1 *The Foucauldian perspective*

Edwards in Legge (1995) argues that employers are interested in issues of control, power, and supervision. From a Foucauldian perspective those concerns can be examined in the study of discourse.

Legge (1995) summarised Foucault's central concern (1961 English translation of abridged 1964 edition 1967; 1969 English edition 1972; 1973; 1977; 1980; 1981; 1985a; 1985b) as '*...to make strange or problematic, the familiar, refusing to begin [...] analysis with supposedly self-evident concepts such as "individual" or "organisation".*' That is exactly the point of discourse. For Foucault discourse constructs the topic (Hall, 1997), but that is not to say that the topic did not exist before the discourse formed (Kendall *et al.*, 1999). The argument is not that nothing exists outside of discourse, but that nothing has any meaning outside of discourse (Foucault, 1969 English edition 1972). To understand the meaning of work it is necessary to study the discourse of work and its subsidiary discourses.

Within a Foucauldian perspective it is necessary to explore both what can be seen in a set of social arrangements and what is said about those arrangements in a contemporary context. Thus in *Discipline and Punishment* (1977) Foucault showed how the visibility of the institution 'prison', produced statements about criminality that induced forms of visibility, which reinforced the perceived reality of prison. The statements and the visibility mutually condition each other (Kendall *et al.*, 1999), to produce discourse.

The discourses of the internal labour market, of strategic HRM and the binary couplet of typical-atypical work only became apparent when a variety of strategies of power and knowledge are applied to those topics. To understand those topics it is necessary to understand those underlying strategies. The strategies do not reside in persons or institutions; rather they are embedded in a network of relationships which are systematically connected (Legge, 1995 p 305). Power is relational and becomes apparent when exercised through the practices, techniques and procedures that give it effect (ibid).

Power should not simply be thought of as disciplining or controlling sub-ordinates as super-ordinates are also enmeshed within it. Within this conception actors are active agents and not 'cultural dupes', a descriptor attributed to Guest by Legge (2001) in Storey (2001). Foucault's free subjects are thinking living beings endowed with mental and bodily capacities (Patton, 1998) who are actively involved in positioning themselves in power relationships (Knights *et al.*, 1994). As Foucault famously argued:

*'When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterises these actions by the government of men by other men – in the broadest sense of the term – one includes an important element: freedom. Power is exercised only upon free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power'* (Foucault, 1982 p 221 quotation taken from du Gay (1977))

The relationship between the governed and those that govern is described by Foucault as '*an unstable conjuncture*' as it passes through the manner in which individuals are willing to exist as particular subjects (du Gay, 1977). Similarly, the relationship between the employed and those who employ is an unstable conjuncture. If individuals refuse to, or cannot conduct

themselves, as certain sorts of subjects, then any programme of the super-ordinate which depends on the emergence of that sort of subject will fail (ibid).

Legge (1995), drawing on Parker (1992) summarises these ideas in the following way. The 'real' is created through discourses emergent from power/knowledge relations collectively sustained and continuously renegotiated in the process of making sense. Language is not neutral but is both the means by which a discourse is communicated and a product of the discourse itself. To gain an understanding of the real, to understand why a thing is as it is, it is necessary to uncover how it was formed, in Foucauldian terms to uncover the conditions of possibility, the contingencies (Kendall *et al.*, 1999) of a knowledge or event. Thus to grasp why managers leave the security of the internal market, itself a loaded phrase, all relevant contingencies with which they believe they are faced must be understood.

## **2.2 New Institutional economics**

The discussion so far has emphasised that actors are not free agents but function in a contingent framework that conditions the actor's knowledge of the possibilities open to him. This section takes this discussion into a new institutional economic perspective.

Coase (1937) reasoned that entrepreneurs assume the function of employers where a transaction is more cheaply organised by an employment relationship than by a sales contract (Marsden, 1999). He identified four types of transaction costs of employment; costs of discovery, negotiations, agreement and governance. The first three of these costs are *ex-anti* costs. Governance costs are incurred *ex post*.

The cost of *ex anti* fully negotiating out all the term of a contract of employment and committing those terms to writing will, in all practical senses, be prohibitive. Additionally, it is improbable that all *ex post* variables will be known at the date of contract (Marsden, 1999). A means must be found to accommodate that uncertainty in contractual arrangements.

Marsden (1999) offers three ways in which employer and employee may come together to form their bargain, a sales contract for a particular product or service, a contingent contract whose terms might be adjusted to accommodate specific circumstances, and the employment contract. The employment contract is normally considered to be the typical mode of employment, the mechanism through which services are delivered. The rest of this section will consider key aspects of that mechanism before moving forward, in the next section, to consider interim management.

Using indifference curves Marsden (1999) illustrates a trade-off between complexity of task and the wages received for that task, before adapting the argument to accommodate the uncertainty inherent in an employment contract. Taking an employer's perspective he argues that in conditions of uncertainty, where an employer knows there will be work, but does not know the detail of that work; the employer is likely to trade off pure efficiency for the flexibility inherent in an employment contract. The assumptions imbedded in this argument will be explored further below, but for the moment it is sufficient to take away the idea that employment contracts do not exhaustively specify employees' tasks and consequently offer a measure of flexibility. That flexibility is one of the sites of an unstable conjunction within employment contracts. Further, it is reasonable to propose that the greater the expertise required to perform the work, the less detailed performance will be specified in the contract.

Hayek (1945) observed the importance of the concept of bounded rationality in human decision making and the consequent likelihood of knowledge asymmetries in transactions. Williamson (1975) applied Hayek's work to the microeconomic environment of firms and markets. Markets cannot function without knowledge and it is the difference in knowledge between market players which creates the opportunity for profit. Therefore *ex anti* decisions are made within an imperfect information set.

In these circumstances employers take the contractual offer to a point where they believe they will be able to bind a perspective employee to an envisaged performance; and

employees take a view of what will reasonably be expected of them in terms of performance under the contract. This conjunction tends towards equilibrium as the parties negotiate contractual performance, and Rousseau's (1995) idiosyncratic views apart (as to which see below), form the basis of an informal, or psychological, contract.

The party's assessment of the benefit of a contract has been made within a state of bounded rationality (Simon, 1947). Bounded rationality brings to uncertainty the notion of individuals acting to maximising their own welfare, but with limited ability to know whether that preferred outcome, or indeed any other outcome, will arise.

Williamson (1975) suggests the individual decision making is characterised by 'self-interest with guile'. He argues (1975, 1985) that there is a tendency amongst employees to use their knowledge of their work and of the production skills, and the idiosyncratic skills they have acquired through the work process to manipulate information to obtain a better effort-bargain. He argues that low skilled workers who acquire sufficient idiosyncratic skills in their work are uneconomic to replace whilst they work within a production boundary defined at one extreme by the productivity of a new entrant to the work and at the other by the productivity possibility of their idiosyncratic skill. In short, workers need not perform to their full capability, but must be more productive than a new entrant if they are to avoid the consequences of spot contracting.

If the opportunity to act with self-interest is available to low skilled workers, where it can be assumed that management have knowledge of, or at least the general arrangement of, the work, the risk of self-interest must be significantly higher in relation to expert work.

Finally, it might be thought that a decision, particularly a decision to employ temporary labour might be no more than a matter of expediency. There is a superficial attractiveness in the simplicity of this idea, but to find that a particular conduct was expedient it is necessary first to consider the contingencies of the expedient act or actors. A business may not have internally the skills which it seeks from the market. That might be an entirely

sensible position to be in where the need for those skills is infrequent, but the decision might be judged in an entirely different way where, as is frequently the case in information technology, the need is constant and the contingent workforce is a significant proportion of the total workforce.

## **3 Interim Management**

### **3.1 *The Market***

There is little clarity about why the profession of interim management developed, or, indeed, what an interim manager is. Clutterbuck *et al* (1999) placed the origin of the profession in a potentially conflicting dyad. On the one hand they suggest citing (Golzen, 1992) that the roots of the profession lay in the Netherlands in the mid to late -1970s (and see Felstead and Jewson, 1999) where the practice of employing temporary management developed in reaction to the labour law institutional environment in Holland which imposed substantial additional fixed costs on firms employing full time managers. Alternatively, interim managers were originally seen as stop gaps, emergency managers brought in at short notice to plug an unexpected hole, only later developing into one of the tools of strategic resourcing (Clutterbuck *et al.*, 1999). This demand side perspective is re-enforced by Clutterbuck and Dearlove's in their reference to Charles Handy's (1989) shamrock organization, an organization divided into three parts, a core of workers, supported by outside workers and part time help, a concept which echoes the influential work of Atkinson (1984) and the idea of the flexible firm.

Despite the importance of the interim market there is some confusion about its size. The Sambrook Report (2000) was commissioned by the Institute of Management Consultancy and Executiveonline Ltd, an interim management agency. The objective of the report was, *inter alia*, to define the scope of the interim management market. Seven interim management agencies and 25 end-users of interim management services were interviewed



by telephone. Secondly, a qualitative survey of interim managers was undertaken by asking 500 interim managers to complete a web hosted questionnaire. 108 responded and took part in the survey. The Report suggests that there are 2400 interims working at any one time, and that is approximately 53% of the market supply.

Others see the interim manager as a much rarer breed. The CBI Business Guide to Interim executives (BEI/CBI) puts the number at 'a few hundred'. Cain puts the numbers at 'fewer than a thousand' (Cain, 2002). Casual inspection of the internet, and recognition of the number of interim agencies now trading, suggests that agencies are either having a hard time servicing a small number of interims or there is something about the size of the market which required further investigation.

In passing the descriptive language used to describe the interim should be noted. Is there any significance that, e.g. the CBI refers to interims as executives rather than managers? Might the profession be stratified between Executives, who are few, and managers who are relatively plentiful?

The books written specifically about the interim market (Clutterbuck *et al.*, 1999; McGovern *et al.*, 2001; Russell, 1998), need to be considered as biographies of the agencies associated with the authors, accompanied by interesting, but superficial, notes of interviews with clients or experienced interims. The evident primary purpose of this genre is marketing not scholarship

The popular interim literature should also be approached with caution. It is almost universally over enthusiastic about the role of interims. However it does seek to distinguish interim managers from other forms of contingent worker by their experience.

The Sambrook Report (2000) concluded from its research that interim management could be defined in terms of the provision of mature, professional managers, well qualified by practical experience either to fill a gap in a permanent post or to project manage change within a limited period. Despite the ambiguity in that conclusion, does limited period apply to

both categories of work; the proposition argued by this paper is that the temporal nature of the transaction is an essential ingredient of interim management. However, to rely only on a temporal classification, even one qualified by experience, will not distinguish interim managers from other professionals who work on short, fixed term, contracts

### **3.2 *The Interim Manager***

Despite the weight of academic consideration of atypical employment, relatively little has been written about atypical management, or at least that which has been written has not been conceptualised as such. The literature has tended to conflate managers employed by an organisation, possibly as part of a flexible employment strategy, on a closed contract with managers who have an open ended commitment to a career as an interim manager within which they undertake closed assignments for particular employers. This tendency is illustrated by Inkson, Heising et al (2001) who rather promisingly suggest that interim managers are usually self-employed before analysing their sample through a conceptual framework derived from Rousseau (1995) which owes much to the employee relations perspective (Kunda *et al.*, 2002) and the prejudicial view of temporary work derived from market segmentation theory.

There are a number of definitions of what an interim manager is, but that of Simms, inspired by one of the leading market makers in the sector Martin Woods of the agency BIE, will serve for present purposes.

*‘Interim managers are experienced, confident operators who can step in at extremely short notice to cover gaps in company hierarchies or to manage specific ventures or restructuring. They work at or near board level and are given the authority to make changes’* (Simms, 2003)

Professional workers have not been immune from the movement to market based employment practices (Purcell *et al.*, 1998). Can these professionals and the highly skilled

quasi professionals typified by skilled workers in the information technology sector be distinguished from the professional interim manager?

This paper seeks to answer that question by considering the nature of each type of engagement. Table 1 shows a typology of atypical workers derived from four dimensions. The first dimension is that of market power, can the employee easily relocate to another engagement? Secondly can the employee define what tasks he or she undertakes within their employment? Thirdly, can the employer direct the employee's work within a task, and finally can the employer order the performance of tasks. Within this typology Interim Executives and Managers are hypothesised to enjoy relative freedom within their work environment.

Interim Executive	Experienced executive working at or near Board level with either executive responsibility for a substantial element of the organisation or project responsibility	High	High	High	<b>High</b>
Interim Manager	Formerly a senior/middle manager now typically employed in a temporary line function	Low-Medium	Medium	High	<b>Low</b>
Contract Professional	Skilled professional from either the traditional (e.g. lawyer accountant) or new professionals (e.g. IT)	Generic skills – power will depend on market conditions	Low	High	<b>Medium</b>

Skilled-worker	Generic craft skills	Generic skills – power will depend on market conditions	Low	Low	<b>Low</b>
Semi-skilled worker	Idiosyncratic skills specific to a particular employer or sector	Power limited to the difference in cost between the output of this class of workers and the deduced output of their replacements	Low	Low	<b>Low</b>
<b>Unskilled</b>	<b>Generic labour</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Low</b>

**Table 1 Working typology of contingent labour**

Fixed term full time management hires can be distinguished from the atypical workers of Ritzer's MacDonaldised Society (Ritzer, 1993) cited in Beynon (1997), the semi-skilled and unskilled in Table1, by the latter's almost complete lack of power,. A further distinction can be made between interim work, to the extent that the practice of management is not an application of standardised skills typified by the kind of contract work that demands high standard, standardised skills such as accounting, nursing or engineering (Uzzi et al., 1998); and skilled craft workers.

Control offers another distinction. In contrast to workers in a Macdonaldised role, whose work tends to be controlled by the processes with which the worker is engaged, the skilled contractor has full administrative control over his or her work (Uzzi et al., 1998) but possibly not over the work of others. These arguments will be developed later using Blackler's (1995) typology of knowledge to further distinguish between skilled contractors and Interim Managers.

A potential differentiator between temporary full time hires and Interim Managers might be if the services provided are analogous to a contract of service. A fixed term professional hire of the type considered by Uzzi and Barsness (1998), is a contract for the performance of services within an organisation's hierarchical structure. The professional is substituted into the workplace instead of engaging an employee in a standard employment arrangement. Some interim assignments might have a similar profile, but the literature appears to

emphasise change (Simms, 2003) or project based work (Glover, 2002). However, the nature of the contractual arrangement cannot, of itself, be conclusive. Both a contract of services and a contract for services potentially falls within the definition of contingent employment provided by Polivka and Natdone – ‘*any job in which an individual does not have an explicit or implicit contract for a long term employment and one in which the minimum hours can vary in a non-systematic way*’ (Polivka and Natdone, 1989, p 11 cited in Coyle-Shapiro et al (2002)). It is necessary to look beyond the formal contract and to consider the individual manager’s psychological contract.

There is a scarcity of empirical evidence that relates explicitly to the psychological contracts of interim management market. Inkson *et al*’s (2001) interview of 50 interim managers possibly represents the high water mark of empirical evidence in this field, but that research drew on a research cohort from a single agency and consequently may be tainted by pre-selection, the work undertaken in New Zealand may not be representative of the labour market generally, and the research cohort was biased towards finance and accounting, an identifiably professional skill set. Felham and Hughes’ (1999) study of the personality characteristics of managers on short term contracts, although not explicitly excluding managers on contracts for services, appears to have drawn a research cohort of interim managers, but that cohort was drawn from a single agency. Other work on psychological contracts has focused on managers in temporary contracts of services (See e.g. Coyle-Shapiro *et al.*, 2000, 2002).

The difficulty inherent in a hypothesis that the psychological contracts of interim managers differ from those of other managers is summarised by Inkson *et al* (2001) by their concept of *psychological contract drift* and the phenomenon of repeated contract extensions reported by Inkson *et al* (2001). A number of possible explanations present themselves. Inkson *et al* suggest a hypothesis that Interim managers tend to accumulate additional responsibilities within an assignment beyond those specified in their original agreement. In proposing this hypothesis no attempt is made to attribute causation. It may simply be that firms find it

useful to have additional senior management available. However, Bernasek and Kinnear (1999) identify a group of contingent workers who would prefer permanent work. Moreover, Cohen and Mallon (1999) cited in Inkson et al (2001) at p 263 have found that *'...independent contractors whose careers have involved periods of stable employment and hierarchical progress frequently exhibit nostalgia for their former security and inclusion. Even though individuals may understand that they and not an employer are now responsible for their employability, they may still seek to create a niche for themselves within an employing firm by identifying, acquiring and performing valued roles'* (Inkson et al., 2001).

McGovern and Russell (2001) develop a more positive view of the supply side of the market. They argue that the majority of independents, a major weakness of their work is that they appear not to distinguish between free agents, independent consultants and interim managers, have adopted their career path to take control of their working lives (ibid pp 24-4). This idea of non-standard work as a voluntary option is consistent with Albert and Bradley's (1997) independent expert thesis and is explored by Rosenberg et al (1999) in relation to the wider market for atypical employment but of greater interest to this study is the empirical work of Mallon (1998) and Kunda et al (2002) where the employment choices of contingent professional workers are considered.

Mallon's (1998) study was of ex-managers of one branch of the public sector. The study initially involved 16 participants but the study was allowed to snowball as respondents suggested other people to interview (Mallon, 1998, p 365). The study was explicitly interpretive and qualitative (ibid). The majority of the participants in the study were recent converts to self-employment. Mallon developed the notion of push and pull towards the development of career types to develop a typography of four groups, *refugees*, those who had been pushed to self-employment by labour market forces and who retained an orientation towards contractual employment; *missionaries*, who have a positive orientation to entrepreneurial work and who relish the opportunity to gain autonomy in their career;

*trade-offs*, those who, possibly on a temporary basis, sought a better life work balance; and *converts* who, most likely start as refugees before developing an appreciation of the benefits of self-employment. Of those interviewed the largest group professed to characteristics which would fit them within Mallon's refugee category.

Albert and Bradley (1997) are primarily concerned with missionaries. They describe a class of expert workers who have proactively chosen to work outside the 'typical' employment market. Their thesis can draw some comfort from the study of Kunda *et al* (2002). Here the research, undertaken in the United States, was of 52 highly skilled technical contractors. Participants were asked what triggered their entry to the contingent market. The two most frequent responses tying at 21% each was that the participant lost their previous job, or that they feared probable loss of their jobs. When asked what factors encouraged 'escape into contracting, the two most common responses, again at 21%, related to networking, previous encounters with contractors or encounters with staffing firms. Kunda, *et al*'s 2002 findings were almost entirely positive.

### **3.3 Conclusions**

In summary, the empirical evidence is inconclusive. It is not possible to define with any precision the boundaries of the interim management market or the characteristics of interim managers within that market. The section suggests a hypothesis, summarised in , that the distinction may be derived from power. Nevertheless further work needs to be done in this area.

Although there is no firm evidence to suggest that interim managers have different psychological contract to typical managers, this section has hypothesized that a difference does exist, but has also noted the possibility of psychological drift and a yearning amongst some independent contractors for permanent work.

Clearly there is an interim management market and a body of expert workers who identify with that market. A research agenda exists both in relation to supply and demand. The primary focus of this paper will be to consider supply issues, why should managers expose themselves to the vagaries of market forces, but necessarily some elements of demand will need to be addressed.

## 4 Typical work?

The nature of the employment contract was outlined in section 2.2. The bargain contains both explicit legal obligations which bind both parties and implicit terms that reflect the shared expectation of the parties (Coyle-Shapiro *et al.*, 2000; Schein, 1977; Wolfe *et al.*, 1997) or the individual's expectation of the nature of the implicit contract (Rousseau, 1995). The contract reflects the contingencies that the parties were faced with when the contract was formulated.

A central contingency is the power relationship between employer and employee. This section explores that relationship by tracing the employment relationship as an unstable Foucauldian conjunction through a historic perspective and in doing so will illustrate that the distinctive relationship, *qua* employer, that workers have is dependent on the skills they bring it to the workplace. Edward's (1979), in Legge (1995), suggestion that employers are interested in issues of control, power and supervision provides a starting point from which to consider the development of employment practices.

The section first considers a Victorian model of employment, or rather a model of employment rooted in Victorian employment practices but which persisted in the UK employment market to the late forties or early fifties, and which, in the manufacturing sector, may yet persist to this day (Warde, 1989). Parallels are drawn with modern labour practices and it is noted that the late nineteenth century catalyst for change was not dissimilar to the forces that drove change in the late nineteen-seventies.



The argument is explicitly made that the possession of skill transformed a workers employment prospects. The section goes on to consider ideas of control of job design by management and economic arguments for the development of the internal labour market. The internal labour market is posited as a means by which employers sought increased profitability through job design, control structures and skill retention. However, in drawing on a Foulcauldian perspective a process is described in which the demands of capital are attenuated by the deliberate actions and choices of the work force.

Finally this section outlines institutional processes in the wider external environment which pre-disposed employers towards the internal labour market as a means of human resource management.

#### **4.1 Tradition in name only**

There has been a remapping of modes of employment in recent years (Boxall *et al.*, 2003) with the consequence, in perception if not in fact, that there has been a bifurcation between insiders and outsiders in the labour market (Boxall *et al.*, 2003), with a consequent increase in atypical employment. At the heart of this change in the relationship between management and workers is a shift in economic risk from the employer to the employee, by allowing the pressures of product and labour markets to '*mediate the relationship between workers and management*' (Capelli *et al.*, 1997).

Drawing on descriptions of work before Heery *et al.*'s (2000) so called '*golden age*' of the seventies employment market' the idea that security of employment is a norm is challenged. The argument is developed in this section, and in the following section which addresses the internal labour market, that security of employment was a temporary attribute of the employment market. It follows that the window in which an atypical-typical comparison can be made is no greater than the 25 or 30 years following the end of the Second World War.

By identifying casual and temporary work as typical of Victorian employment and, probably, as the normal model of employment until the mid-twentieth century and possibly beyond, Warde (1989) draws attention to the irony in the discourse of the new employment scenario, which holds that the economy is developing towards significant use of contingent forms of working (Coyle-Shapiro *et al.*, 2002; Inkson *et al.*, 2001). Further he argues that there has always been temporary and seasonal work outside the manufacturing sector.

The work systems in common use in the Victorian period can be ascertained from the work of O'Day and Englander (Englander *et al.*, 1995; O'Day *et al.*, 1993) in their analysis of the Booth Archives and the published output from those archives<sup>1</sup>. The labour market was highly segmented and largely casualised. Small masters operated simple management systems, within which once skilled crafts had been broken down into simple process steps and where workers were subject to close supervision (O'Day *et al.*, 1993). Management of workshops was often vested in a foreman who had responsibility for wages, working practices and advancement (*ibid* p 125). In certain trades work was given to the foreman at a given price to be performed in a given time (*ibid*, p 126). This system, the 'gang boss', or internal contracting in Littler's (1982) typology, solved a number of management concerns. Chief amongst these, and with very strong parallels in the twenty-first century labour market, was that control of work was vested in those with expertise in the work, and that the system permitted flexibility in the numbers of staff employed (Salaman, 1992).

Larger firms adopted what appeared to be very modern labour practices (O'Day *et al.*, 1993) O'Day and Englander give examples of the provision of technical education for apprentices, profit sharing schemes and an eight hour day, but those same employers used the complete lack of labour regulation to control their workforce. The manufacturing

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<sup>1</sup> *The Industrial Series within Life and Labour of the People of London* published in 17 volumes between 1889 and 1903.

chemists, Burrows-Wellcome, used seasonal fluctuations in trade to discipline their workforce. They maintained detailed performance notes on their workforce during the year, discharging one third of them during the slack summer months, and only rehiring those who were deemed satisfactory in the autumn.

Throughout much of the Victorian period expertise, particularly if accompanied by worker solidarity, transformed work expectations. Where skilled labour was organised in union or guilds, management had little say in how or when work was performed (O'Day *et al.*, 1993). Here, in their skill and their ability to organise themselves lay the only security of the Victorian workforce. Where work was unskilled it was typically casual with no assurance of continuity of contract. What was to change was a closer involvement by managers with skilled, expert work.

Drawing strong parallels with the nineteen seventies, the great depression of the late nineteenth century brought with it the need to adopt new work systems, and for management to take an interest in the process of work through assumptions of responsibility for job design, control structures and the employment relationship (Salaman, 1992).

In summary the Victorian workforce could be segmented on the basis of skill. Skilled workers had a measure of job security and consequent control over their working lives. Unskilled workers were exposed to the full rigor of the market. Market pressures led employers to seek, through an understanding of job design and control, greater control over skilled work. In doing so they moved a greater proportion of the work force to exposure to market forces. The process by which this was to be achieved will be considered next.

## ***4.2 Control through deskilling: Job design, power and knowledge***

The question of control pervades any consideration of work systems. The argument will be developed from the Victorian work systems previously discussed to Taylorism and Fordism; but the resulting traverse should not be taken as implying from that either Taylor or Ford destroyed craft control. To do so would be to be guilty of the romanticism with which Littler (1978) charges Baverman (1974). The craft system had been substantially destroyed in the United States in the nineteenth century (Littler, 1978). Taylorism should be viewed as a transition from internal contracting to control by management (Littler, 1978). In Britain, the main focus of this paper, the transition from internal contracting was far from straight forward, leading firstly in many industries to the role of the internal contractor being inherited by powerful directly employed foreman (ibid) before, but not before the inter-war years, Taylorism was to drastically curtail the discretion of that foreman (ibid).

It was managements lack of control of the work system which led to the opportunity for workers to engage in what Taylor (1856-1915) described as *systematic soldiering*, doing only that which was required rather than working at the speed of which they were capable (Huczynski *et al.*, 2001). Summarising Williamson (1975, 1985); workers need not perform to their full capability, but must be more productive than a new entrant if they are to retain their position.

By codifying and systemising the direct control principles of work design and proselytising '*passionately for their introduction across the workshops of the fast growing industrial of that time*' (Watson, 2002) Taylor provided management with a set of tools and a language around which the discourse of managism could form. Watson (2002) defined managism as '*...a belief that there is a distinctive management expertise based on a body of objective management knowledge which managers should apply to enable them rationally to design,*

*maintain and drive organisational systems in the same way that expert engineers design and maintain machines'.*

For Taylor man was the machine. In transforming Schmidt's work load from twelve and a half tons of pig iron a day to forty-seven and a half tons, Taylor had no regard for Schmidt the man. He was nothing more than a machine. It was Ford who questioned why Schmidt should be carrying the pig iron at all (Hounshell, 1984). This question encapsulates the differences between Taylorism and Fordism. For Taylor the task was a given and the role of scientific management was to improve its efficiency. For Ford the challenge was to eliminate the task through machinery (ibid). From the perspective of the employee both processes had the same effect; of creating tasks that can be performed by unskilled labour. From the employer's perspective Taylorism intensified work; Fordism intensified the use of capital, but both give the employer greater control over the work process.

Initially, these processes must have seemed remote from middle management, but technological changes have helped to deskill and routinise many primary sector jobs (Braham, 1992). One outcome of this process is what Davies called the '*minimum intervention model*'. Within that model:-

*'...there is a minimal connection between the individual and the organisation in terms of skill, training, involvement and the complexity of his contribution, in return for maximum flexibility and independence on the part of the organisation in using its manpower. In other words the organisation strives for maximum interchange-ability of personnel (with minimum training) to reduce its dependence on the availability, ability, or motivation of individuals.'* (Davis (1966 p 302) quotation taken from Braham, 1992)

Whilst Labour was plentiful, the commoditisation of work in this way placed power firmly in the hands of the employer. However, the danger exists that in times of labour scarcity employees will readily be able to find alternate, and more remunerative, employment. It is

this risk which partially underpinned the development of the internal labour market discussed in Section five.

### **4.3 *The interplay of power and knowledge***

The interplay of power and knowledge between employers and employees will, initially, be considered through Braverman's (1974) radical institutional approach to job design and the revitalisation of interest in Braverman created by Friedman (1977). Finally, Friedman's position will be examined from a Foucauldian perspective.

Braverman's (1974) critique of Taylor's principles of scientific management was an attempt to relate what he saw as the imperative for capital accumulation under capitalism to the design of work systems and the experience of work within those systems (Salaman, 1992). Salaman summarizes the implication for job design of Braverman's position through two lines of argument. First, technology used in the work place is not neutral. The relationship between scientific management and developments in science and technology pervades the relationship between work rationalization and new technology. The process of scientific management is driven by economic forces that arise from the imperatives of capital. Secondly, attempts to adjust work design to improve variety or in favour of job enrichment are, at best cosmetic and manipulative; on the one hand accustoming the worker to the capitalist mode and form of production, and on the other concealing the long term trend towards deskilling and enhanced management control.

Braverman's position has been subject to considerable criticism, see e.g. Clayden (2001), but interest in this area has been stimulated by Friedman's (1977; 1990) construction of an alternative approach to Braverman. Friedman's position is that the primary concern of management is not control but profitability. He posits a continuum of job design and control structures, in effect a range of contingencies within which managers must make choices whether, at one extreme to follow a process of control, deskilling and low trust employment relations, and at the other a policy of high-skilled jobs based on flexibility and high-trust

relationships. That continuum accommodates Legge's (1995) hard and soft notion of human resource management as in either case, following Friedman's attribution of the power of choice to managers, the outcome is managism, managers' belief that they have the ability to rationally drive, organise and maintain organisational systems (Watson, 2002).

A critique of Friedman's perspective can be founded in the relationship between the employed and the employee. That relationship, whether it is derived from typical or atypical employment, is a relationship of power and knowledge encapsulated in the Foucauldian idea of an unstable conjunctive. It has been argued that employees are not mere dupes. An employer's possible range of choices along Friedman's continuum is attenuated by the freedoms of choice which employees enjoy. Of course the extent of attenuation will depend on the mediation of the power/knowledge in the discourse of the work system or model of employment which prevails. Conceptualising work systems and models of employment in this way suggests they are forums within which the employed and employees seek to mediate power and knowledge to produce temporary stability in an inherently unstable conjunctive.

The argument that has been developed neatly ignores any qualitative assessment of power but it is axiomatic that within a conjunctive of unskilled workers and their management the management position will be much closer to Weber's idea of power, of coercion and a contest of wills (Rueschmeyer, 1986), and, as with Said's *Orientals* (Said, 1985), workers will assume the role expected of them. Skilled workers, experts, or at least those experts who have more than the idiosyncratic skills required by their existing employer, are more likely, because of their intrinsic market value to be able to mediate managerial power.

## **4.5 Conclusions**

This section has shown that Victorian labour practices segmented the workforce on the basis of skill. It has described how employers have attempted to shift the balance of power in the workplace by a process of de-skilling, but that management's power to pursue that

process is mediated by the power of workers, inherent in the minimum intervention model where labour is scarce, but otherwise derived from the individual skills of workers.

## **5 The Internal market and the new deal**

Section 2.2 considered the employment question, the problem of providing a workforce to do available work. Section 4 discussed that question in the context of the power relationship between employer and employee. In this section we discuss an institutional arrangement, the internal labour market, within which employers have sought to resolve that question.

The internal labour market is a specific form of work system within which managers eschew the market in favour of a hierarchical method of labour provision. The previous section illustrated the Victorian labour model in which labour is treated as a readily obtainable commodity. From an employer's perspective where labour is a commodity the problem is one of control; but what is the position where the need is to acquire labour with specific skills, or to retain expensively train labour? Where expertise is needed that expertise may not be freely available in the market. The internal market (Doeringer *et al.*, 1971) is one way in which that criticism is addressed.

This section will first consider the institutional pressures which drove employers to adopt a system of employment described by Doeringer and Piore (1971) as the internal labour market. It will then explore the bargain which arises from the conjunction of management and employee power within that employment system. Finally, the pressures which changed the environment in which the internal market flourished and which caused organisations to reconsider their commitment to that concept are discussed.

### **5.1 The Internal labour market**

It will be recalled that Marsden (1999) suggested the problem of employment can be solved in three ways, through a sales contract for a particular product or service, a contingent



contract whose terms might be adjusted to accommodate specific circumstances, and the employment contract. It will also be recalled that employment contracts are not fully specified. An employment contract brings the employee into a hierarchical method of labour provision but does not of itself fully solve the problem of employment. But the market might not be the solution to the employment problem where labour is scarce, where specific skills are required, or where the employer need to retain expensively train labour. Within the theoretical construct outlined in Section 2.2 the transaction costs of, and the inherent uncertainty in, procurement of suitable skills outweigh the benefit inherent in market sourcing.

The internal labour market (Doeringer et al., 1971) is a specific form of work system which attempts to address these issues by providing an institutional context within which the need for distinctive worker skills and safe worker practices required to operate the new technology which industry had embraced could be met (Boxall et al., 2003).

Price theory can be used to explain the internal labour market as a response to certain types of market failure (Marsden, 2003). Firms, it is argued, will develop internal labour markets in two circumstances; where the skills which they seek are not available on the local labour market or in an attempt to encourage workers to take a long term interest in the success of the firm (ibid). The first case may arise because of genuine labour shortages or because the firm requires idiosyncratic skills which must be developed in-house. The second case addresses both the problem of minimum commitment discussed in section 4.2 and the tendency described by Williamson (1975; 1985) amongst employees to use their knowledge of their work and of the production skills, and the idiosyncratic skills they have acquired through the work process to manipulate information to obtain a better effort-bargain. In either case, according to internal market theory, the tendency to act in a self-interested way will be attenuated by the long term interest in the success of the firm that employees gained through the internal labour market.

Institutional theory offers a further explanation of how an employee's long term interests might be aligned with that of the firm. Within an institutional framework firms will adopt an internal labour market where no occupational market for qualified labour exists (Marsden, 2003). The risk that firms face is of the freeloader. Inter-firm markets for labour with transferable skills are like public goods. They are inherently unstable without a high degree of co-operation between employers to control freeloading (Marsden, 2003). But it is difficult to maintain inter-firm co-operation overtime. Firms may therefore insist that trainees pay the cost of their training or provide an environment in which loyalty to the training provider is maintained. Marsden (2003) attributes to Becker (1975) the proposition that trainee should bear the entire cost of training in transferable skills, but there are strong practical and theoretical reasons why employers accept these costs (Marsden, 2003). Chief amongst those reasons are that relying on trainees paying their own way limits investment in training to what the trainee can pay. Further, trained workers may be concerned that low paid trainees may be exploited as cheap labour to the detriment of the trained worker. In consequence trained workers can be expected to seek to limit the numbers of training contracts provided and/or to seek increase in the labour rates paid to trainees (Marsden, 2003). In either case, and within this analysis, skilled labour will be in short supply and, in the absence of strong institutional pressure, poaching will be encouraged.

The internal labour market provides a framework within which employer and employee can risk share. The employer pays for training at a rate which reflects his and the employees ongoing commitment to the firm. The need to negotiate a settlement suggests that employees are not entirely powerless in the employment relationship

## ***5.2 Political contingencies and the internal labour market***

In describing the pressures to develop the internal labour market a position has been developed within which employers created internal labour markets as a means to control workers and as a means to manage the cost of skill acquisition and retention. However, it is

overly simplistic to explain the development of the internal labour market simply in economic terms. The post second world war period was a period of unprecedented political pressure within the employment market

The period following the Second World War can be conceptualised either as a period where government was constrained by dominant socio-economic groups on whom they were dependent for political and economic resources or as a 'State Centred' period in which the expansion of Government was driven by internal political bureaucratic imperatives through which the State acquired a more directive role in relation to the economy and civil society (McGrew, 1992). In the latter case the State addressed the potential disruption to its plans by powerful interest groups, trade unions, employers' organisations, professional organisations and corporate capital by incorporating those institutions into a corporatist state. In either case the result was an unprecedented degree of social intervention, of which the internal labour market was an example. Whether as a result of social pressure or a state centric government the immediate post war period was characterised by a new way of economic thinking that eschewed *laissez-faire* for regulated competition (Swan *et al.*, 1964).

The United States led the adoption of regulated competition (Viator, 1994). Its experience of the depression, and the associated failure of competition to provide its promised economic benefits, led the United States Government to adopt domestically a form of corporatism, voluntary cooperation between the state and trade associations which broadened into a regime of economic regulation the purpose of which was to maintain a stable-economic environment (Viator, 1994). The policy pursued from the late 1930s to the late 1960s, Keynesian in substance if not in name, stopped short of central planning, but legitimised federal intervention in the economy to an extent unprecedented in United States history (ibid).

As an adjunct to its post war aid programme to Europe, United States policy was to impose a similar regime within Europe (ibid; Hogan (1985). The resulting welfare capitalism had a

profound effect on the labour market (Edye *et al.*, 1996) encouraging labour market rigidities through the development by employers of long term employment plans (ibid).

The British employment market was adversely effected by an inflexibly demarcation of jobs (Edye *et al.*, 1996). One consequence was a loss of productivity (ibid) and competitiveness. (Boxall *et al.*, 2003). Just as the great depression of the late nineteenth century, brought with it the need to adopt new work systems the substantial changes in the competitive environment caused by global crisis of the nineteen seventies and eighties caused significant change in the way in which people thought about human resourcing (Boxall *et al.*, 2003). These changes coincided with the new right in the United Kingdom led to a reduction in institutional pressure for employers to maintain internal labour markets. At the same time there were significant changes in the nature of work. These pressures will be discussed below, but first the following section will outline the nature of the internal labour market bargain.

### **5.3 *The Internal labour market bargain***

The internal labour market, Doeringer and Piore (1971), Jacoby (1984), cited in Boxell and Purcell (2003), Osterman (1982)), is, relatively speaking, a new phenomenon. A post second world war development, it has been described by Marsden (1999) as one of the two great innovations underpinning the rise of the modern corporation, the other being the development of new forms of capital. The rhetoric of the internal market suggests an arrangement within which '*...firms and workers [...have a...] flexible method of coordination and a platform for investing in skills*' (Boxall *et al.*, 2003 p 116).

The internal labour market can be conceptualised as an attempt to establish a stable conjunctive. It is both a means by which employers' seek to establish some form of control over the labour market and labour processes and the site within which employees psychological contracts are delivered. Osterman (1987) reduces the resulting rules of engagement to four categories:-

- Job definition rules
- Career development rules
- Job security rules
- Wage rules

At an individual level these rules might be thought of as shared expectations between employers and employees. It will be recalled that employment contracts are notoriously difficult to reduce into writing. Consequently it is necessary to build certainty into the arrangement by implication. The resulting implied terms are usually referred to as the psychological contract and represent the shared expectation of the parties (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2000; Schein, 1977; Wolfe et al., 1997). More recently, Rousseau (1995) has conceptualised the psychological contract as the sum of an individual's belief about the terms of their employment. This idea moves the psychological contract away from the realm of bargain, and of contract, towards expectancy theory. In suggesting a root for psychological contracts in expectancy theory Grant (1999) draws parallels between Rousseau's concept of the psychological contract and the theory of motivation towards work which suggests a

ausal relationship between the individuals expectations and the experience of work (Boxall et al., 2003).

To privilege an individual's expectation over the traditional view of the psychological contract potentially disregards the conjunctive of power between employer and worker. It is within that conjunctive that expectations are formed and it is both the nature of that bargain and the way in which it is delivered that is the determinant of motivation.

## **5.4 Internal market disintegration**

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the internal labour market was considered the defining feature of sophisticated personnel management Foulkes (1980) cited in Boxall *et al* (2003). The demise of the internal labour market, or at least its demise in the commercial sector of the economy, can be traced to four causes, changes in the nature of work, the inherent conservatism of the concept in practice, changes in the wider social environment, and the changes in the nature, and in particular in the intensity, of the competition which undertakings face.

There has been a significant decrease in the importance of manufacturing in the UK economy. In 1979 over seven million people were employed in manufacturing industry, by 1995 that figure had reduced to three and three quarter million (Beynon, 1997 pp 21-2). As the manufacturing sector declined the service sector expanded significantly to embrace a wide variety of jobs. In addition to changes in the way in which work was organised the last twenty-five years have seen significant changes in the nature of work. The bifurcation of work between low skilled Taylorised employment and high skilled knowledge work has been thrown into sharp relief.

Braverman (1974) had argued that there was a tendency for work to become deskilled as Frederick Taylor's techniques of scientific management were more widely introduced. Critics of Braverman have argued that he failed to appreciate that many of the jobs in the mid-seventies economy required as much or more skills than those which were disappearing. Although it is argued that part of the causation of the mid-seventies disjunctive in employment practice was a rejection of Fordism and scientific management (Boxall *et al.*, 2003) the new service sector encompasses Ritzer's (1993), cited in Beynon (1997) MacDonaldised Society, a society characterised by:-

*'...Fordism, notably homogenous products, rigid technologies, standardized work routines, deskilling, homogenization of labor (and customer), the mass worker and*

*the homogenization of consumption...*' (Ritzer, 1993) quote taken from (Beynon, 1997)

Clearly, there was vindication for Braverman in the MacDonaldised society, but what of the counter-argument? The service sector was not entirely composed of deskilled, Taylorised workers. The sector also embraces Reich's symbolic analysts, the 'fortunate fifth' (Reich, 1991; Robins, 1997). Robins, (1997) describes Reich's symbolic analyst as individuals who have occupations:-

*'...involving the non-standardized manipulation of symbolic information (data, words, oral and visual representations), and who continuously accumulate mobile, transferable and hence highly valued skills, skills that are autonomous of fixed organizational or national location.'* (Robins, 1997)

The formal rationality (Weber, 1964) of the industrial age, rooted on the pervading values typified by Taylorism and Fordism, indeed the concept of managism itself, may not hold good where the value of an enterprise is within a group of workers; a group moreover who have skills which are readily transferable. Managing experts requires an entirely different perspective to the traditional control mechanisms of Taylorism and Fordism. Managers must be cognisant of the relative power positions of the skill derived classes within the workforce.

The second cause of the failure of the internal labour market was its inherent conservatism. Osterman's (1987) outline of the rules of the internal labour market suggests a framework within which employees build their expectations of the bargain of employment. That framework will include the division between manual and non-manual work, workers and staff and a hierarchy of privilege which addresses those positions and such mundane issues as the allocation of car park spaces, holiday entitlement and canteens (Boxall *et al.*, 2003). Perhaps more importantly, the structure of the internal labour market made, in the broadest sense, for inflexible work arrangements. Whilst it has been noted (in Section 2.2)

that employers will trade efficiency for certainty, there was perhaps too much certainty inherent in the internal labour market.

The rules enshrined in the internal labour market justified at inception by apparently rational decision making, made change difficult (Boxall *et al.*, 2003) even where that change was dictated by the changing external environment. One consequence was a failure in competitiveness, a failure which many undertakings found easier to address through location to new sites or outsourcing rather than in attempting to deal with the problems root cause. In turn that response undermined the very commitment to employers that the internal labour market was intended to promote (Sennett, 1998).

The third cause of the demise of the internal labour market was a change in the wider social structure. The internal labour market was profoundly gendered; it tended to favour a male full time career and to confine woman into secondary labour markets (Boxall *et al.*, 2003). This result was an inevitable consequence of a system with limited ports of entry and access to training. The growth of female participation in the labour market coincided with the rapid expansion of the service sector (Bruegel *et al.*, 1998). Within the wider community, legislation established rights to equal pay and protection against discrimination. Increasingly, woman, and particularly graduate woman (Boxall *et al.*, 2003), entered and remained in the labour market with the expectation that they would be able to use their skills within a career. The resulting increase in labour, and in particular skilled labour, provided a context in which firms labour strategies could be shaped (Boxall *et al.*, 2003). The internal labour market increasingly became irrelevant in solving the employment question and, moreover, represented a brake on efficiency. Within the perspective adopted by this paper the Foucauldian unstable conjuncture shifted in a way which gave employers more power within the employment relationship.

Finally, the internal labour market proved unable to adapt to meet the competitive challenges of the late twentieth century. Ohmae (1982) suggests that a strategy is only necessary when an organisation faces competition. Whether or not that narrow view of



strategy is justified the 1970s saw the coincidence of a major lift in world oil prices and an unprecedented demand for energy in the developed world. If that were not enough Lynch (2000) lists six other major developments in the corporate environment which had an impact on corporate strategic thinking:-

1. *increased global competition for many businesses;*
2. *the consolidation and development of trading blocs;*
3. *the development of telecommunications and computers that have transformed the scope of the environment (along with the absence of major wars), making global communications reliable and cheap;*
4. *the collapse of eastern European controlled economies;*
5. *the rise of the highly competitive and low-wage economies of Far Eastern countries such as Singapore and Malaysia;*
6. *increased levels of training and knowledge of workers.*

(Lynch, 2000)

These factors, taken together, radically changed the competitive environment for many organisations. Boxell and Purcell (2003) chart the human resource implications. First amongst these is a movement away from the internalisation of the internal labour market to externalisation of the workforce. Faced with conditions of uncertainty employers seek to move the consequence of that uncertainty to employees. Employment practice is individualised and includes strategies to link pay to performance, to reduce job security, to use contingent labour, to outplace work and to relocate work in low cost areas.

Secondly, Boxell and Purcell (2003) note that the socio-political climate has changed and with that change has been a reassessment of employer 'good citizenship'. The discourse of the market which rooted in the UK in the Thatcher years, celebrates commercial success over all else. Whereas much of modern employment practice would have been viewed as opportunistic within the discourse of the internal labour market (Boxall *et al.*, 2003), a

company which makes significant redundancies might, in the current climate, very well garner to itself positive comment and a consequent increase in share price.

What does all this mean to the expert employee? The issue of perceived employment security will be dealt with below in Section 7. We are concerned with how these changes play *qua* the power relations inherent in employee relations. In summary, it will be recalled, that where the availability of a particular skill is plentiful, the employer will be in a dominant position. In contrast where the market for a particular skill is tight then power shifts to labour. In those circumstances Boxell and Purcell (2003) argue that company and sector reputation will be important and employees will have expectations of training participation and security, in other words something similar to the bargain of the internal labour market. One way in which employers try to address this potential conflict is through policies of labour market segmentation and flexibility.

## **6 Segmentation and flexibility**

Labour market segmentation and flexible employment policies are two sides of the same coin. In segmentation theory the employment market is classified usually, but not exclusively, between core and periphery workers. Within that classification the implicit assumption is made that core workers are privileged and periphery workers disadvantaged. The theory of the flexible firm (Atkinson, 1984, 1986) is a theory of economic efficiency. It suggests a labour resourcing strategy that, adopting Legge's (1995) typology, is soft on the inside and hard in relation to its periphery workers.

This section raises the hypothesis that expert workers are not easily categorised within conventional labour market segmentation theory and that the theory of the flexibly firm (Atkinson, 1984; 1986) fails adequately to accommodate expert workers who, within Blackler's (1995) classification, have embrained or embodied skills.

## **6.1 *Labour market segmentation***

The idea of a dual labour market has been an influential theoretical perspective on labour market segmentation. The perspective, first developed in the United States, has been widely applied to the United Kingdom and to other western economies. We owe to that perspective the conventional view of the discourse of employment, encapsulated in the many negative definitions of flexibly and non-standard employment (Felstead et al., 1999). That discourse holds that permanent employment is good and atypical employment is bad. That view is given voice in the employee relations perspective which is concerned with the experience of employment, the collective welfare of employees, and by extension the welfare of society as a whole (Kunda et al., 2002). It can be contrasted with the free agent perspective (ibid), which is almost entirely concerned with the experience of highly skilled consultants.

The schism between free agent and employee relations is at the fracture point between typical and atypical employment. What is challenged here is the notion that segmentation ought necessarily to be made simply on the common understanding of typical and atypical employment.

The neo-classical economics position is that labour market segmentation is irrelevant (Allen, 1992). Economic relevance and the consequence status that an individual achieves are derived solely from his or her individual efforts, skills and ability (ibid). To contextualise that view, Blackburn and Mann, 1979 cited in Allen (1992) have shown that 87% of workers exercise less skill at work than they do in driving to work. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that a non-segmented labour market has ever existed. Given the relatively low skill demand made on most employees it is reasonably easy for employers to control entry and promotion through a process of partiality (Cockburn, 1983; 1976 cited in (Braham, 1992 p 282)). Once obtained a skill has a market value which the employee can be expected to exploit. Labour markets are structured so that high skill, high status workers are '*better organised in their*

*position*' (Allen, 1992), whereas pay and conditions are worse for workers who have to continuously compete with their fellows (ibid).

Albert and Bradley (1997) have classified the key theories of labour market segmentation (). Their level 1 of market segmentation is derived from the work of Piore (1970) who defined the segments of the labour market by the people who inhabit it. In a sense the allocation is hard wired. Consequently, Piore's work emphasises the difficult of migration from one Level 1 segment to another and has relevance to the employee relations perspective, and in particular to arguments about mobility between segments, but has little relevance to the subject of this study

Class	Description
Level 1	Divided by class, gender or nationality
Level 2	Divided by industry
Level 3	Divided by occupation
Level 4	Divided by mobility chains
Level 5	Firm internal division

**Table 2 Progressive levels of market segmentation (Albert et al., 1997)**

Level 2 is concerned with division between good and bad industries. In the conception adopted in this paper a bad industry equates to the process view of the world rooted in Fordism, but that process view might include much of the MacDonaldised service sector (Beynon, 1997). 'Good' in this context is a post-Fordist environment dominated by knowledge workers

<b>Percentage of Employees in Fixed Contract or other Temporary employment by industry Groups (Labour Forces Survey Spring 1992-96)</b>					
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Industry Group					
Primary and extractive	7.9	8.4	7.7	9.6	7.5
Manufacturing	3.4	3.3	3.6	4.4	4.3
Electricity Gas and Water supply	3.8	4.9	5.5	6.2	9.8
Construction	6.8	6.3	6.1	7.1	6.6
Wholesale & Retail etc	3.8	3.3	4	3.9	3.6
Hotels and Catering	10.3	10.3	10.6	9.7	10.6
Transport, storage and Communications	3	4.2	4.5	5.1	5.5
Financial Services	2.6	3.6	3.4	5.1	5.9
Real Estate and Property	3.6	4.3	2.7	5.2	4
Computing and Business Services	4.9	6.4	8.9	8.7	8.6
Research and Development	13.4	16.3	13.4	17.3	16
Public Administration	4.9	4.5	5.7	5.8	6.2
Education	13.2	14.6	15.7	16.6	16.9
Health	6.9	6.5	7.4	7.7	7
Other Community and Personal Services	7.5	7.9	11.2	10.5	11.6
All Employees	5.6	5.9	6.5	7	7.1

**Table 3 Source Purcell and Purcell (1998)**

Percentage of Employees in Fixed Contracts or Other Temporary Employment by Sub-Group Occupational Group (labour Forces Survey Spring 1992-96)					
Occupational Group	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Managers and Administrators	2.6	2.3	2.1	2.2	2.6
Science Engineering and other Professional Occupations	4.5	5.7	7.6	7.5	8.3
Health Professionals	21.7	22.6	27.5	30.6	25.3
Teaching Professionals	14.9	16.3	17.9	18.3	18.9
Science Engineering and other Associated Professionals	5.9	6.4	6.7	7.8	7.7
Health Associated Professionals	6.4	6.7	6.7	6.6	5.5
Clerical and Secretarial Occupations	5.3	5.6	6.5	7.3	8
Craft and Related Occupations	3.7	4.3	3.9	4.5	4.2
Personal and Protective Services and Sales Occupations	6.3	6.3	6.7	7.1	7.3
Plant and Machine Operatives and Other Elementary Occupations	6.4	6.4	7.3	8.1	7.4
Total	5.6	5.9	6.5	7	7.1

**Table 4 Source Purcell and Purcell (1998)**

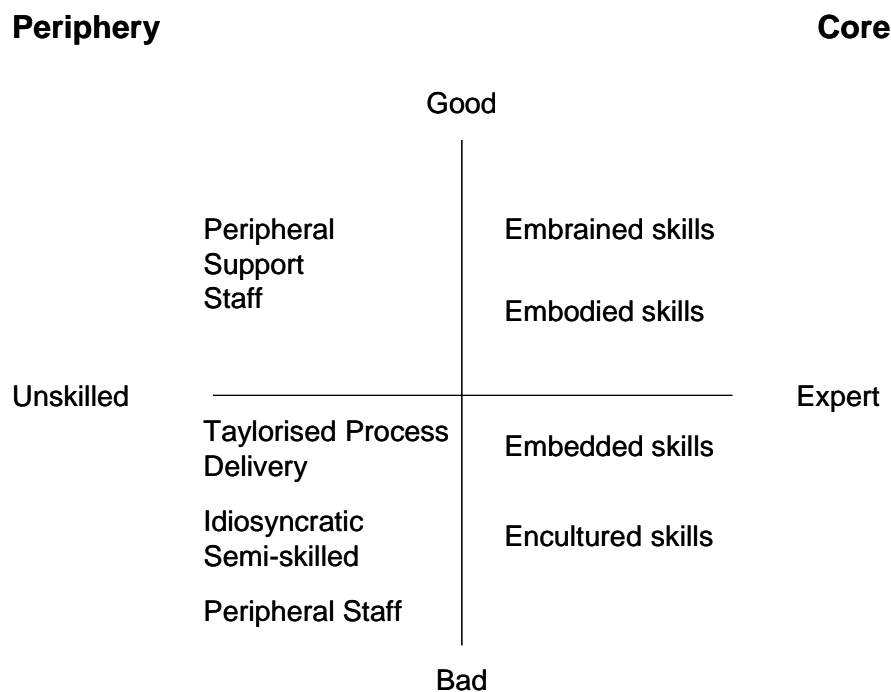
In industry segmentation has been cross cut by a segmentation based on skills with further segmentation utilising Atkinson's core – periphery model (1984; 1986), and Blackler's (1995) typology of knowledge, workers

Figure 1 demonstrates the distribution of skills within the core-periphery model, but also that expertise would be expected, following Atkinson's reasoning, to be skewed towards the core worker category. The empirical evidence, represented by , suggests that a significant number of those 'core' experts might be temporary workers. That impression is reinforced by , which considers the nature of employment contracts by occupational group. By far the largest group of temporary contract works are in health care and education.

It will be recalled from Section 5.4 that where labour is scarce employees will have expectations of training, participation and security (Boxall *et al.*, 2003). A particular form of scarcity is expertise, but in Section 5.4 it was argued that one cause for the demise of the internal labour market, it will be remembered that a primary function of the internal labour market was a skills nursery, was increased female participation in skilled work. The consequent reduction in scarcity should be reflected in wide spread market sourcing. in

addition to the expected incidence of fixed term contracts in 'bad industries' indicates a significant clustering of temporary contracts in the areas of work normally associated with the public sector, and a surprisingly high proportion in the knowledge worker intensive sector of research and development, sectors which might be thought to fall into the category of post-fordist knowledge work.

This outcome fits uneasily with Schuler and Jackson's (1987) observation of the appropriate human resource stance to take in managing knowledge workers.. Schuler and Johnson imply that where recruitment and selection needs to target highly skilled people, job design would have to incorporate considerable autonomy and discretion and appraisal needs to be geared to long term rather than short term objectives. Explicitly, a market based resourcing strategy is focused on short term objectives. Moreover, such a strategy raises issues of training costs and the likelihood that market sourced experts, following Marsden's (2003) reasoning, will limit their training to what's individually affordable with a consequent reduction in overall skills availability



**Figure 1 Market segmentation**

Category	Type of Knowledge	Type of Organization
Embrained Knowledge	Dependant on conceptual skills and cognitive abilities	Symbolic-analyst organizations
Embodied Knowledge	Action Orientated Knowledge	Expert dependent organisations
Encultured Knowledge	Achieved through shared understandings	Communications-intensive organisations
Embedded Knowledge	Resides in Systemic Routines	Knowledge-routinized organisations
Encoded Knowledge	Conveyed in signs and symbols	

**Table 5 Blackler's (1995) Typology of Knowledge**

Level three moves to an analysis based on occupation. Superficially this is an attractive way of looking at the market with a high degree of correlation between occupation and earnings but this basis of segmentation does not address the possibility that many high earning occupations might have members who work in the secondary labour market as illustrated in which shows significant clustering of temporary contract workers in the high skill, high status, professions of health and teaching.

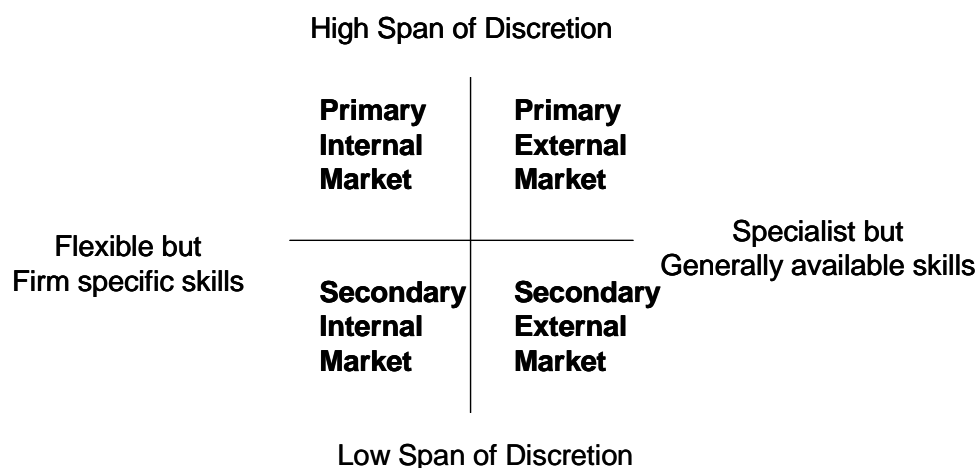
Level four is the familiar territory of Doeringer and Piore (1971) and the internal labour market. Explicitly this is a model of segmentation where the fortunate sit within the internal labour market and the less fortunate are outside its boundaries. But within the internal labour market there is also segmentation. In this conception the sectors are differentiated within the internal labour market by 'mobility chains. The primary sector has mobility chains linked to career development, whereas the secondary sector has mobility chains which lead nowhere. Stewart, Prandy et al (1980) cited in Albert and Bradley (1997) draw a distinction between a permanent clerical worker and a clerical worker occupying a trainee slot for management. Both might be recognised, and Albert and Bradley (1997 p 156) argue should be recognised, as working in the primary sector, but the trainee clearly has better prospects.

The types of segmentation so far discussed owe much to the employee relations perspective and to attempts to gain an understanding of the social structure of the labour



market. In moving to Level 5 the demand side of the labour market becomes the focus of investigation. The model represented by Atkinson's flexible firm (Atkinson, 1986) stresses the organisations needs in the various forms of jobs . The model divides labour *used by a firm* between core and periphery. Atkinson describes the model as exploring '*...the extent to which more flexibly work practices had been introduced, to ascertain under what circumstances particular kinds of change might be found, to consider how permanent they might be and to look at their implications for employees, workers and job seekers*' (Atkinson, 1986 p 5). Echoing Victorian labour practices job security is a determining factor in Atkinson's model.

Loverage (1983) developed an analytical framework of the labour market by combined Atkinson's theory with the dual labour market labour segmentation theory The resulting classification system is shown in . Within this framework most jobs in the primary internal sector are permanent, full time and offer a high degree of discretion and reasonable earnings. The primary secondary external sector includes professionals or skill craftsmen working on a sub-contract basis. The secondary internal sector includes part time employees and the secondary external sector seasonal, casual, home-working and unskilled labour.



**Figure 2 Organisational and Firm specific labour markets**

**Source: Based on Loverage 1983 Figure 7.1 p 159**

This paper is concerned with the primary external market. Boxell and Purcell (2003) position in this sector workers with specialist skills which are generic or skills which are widely available (Boxall et al., 2003). These skills, embodied in Blackler's (1995) typology (see Table 3) require little specific knowledge of the organisation in which they are located. The inclusion of embodied skill sets within the primary external market goes some way to explaining the high proportion of contract workers in education and health (see ). But this paper also has a concern for embrained workers. These workers can be defined both by the flexibility of their skills and by their ability to apply these skills in a non-specific context. They do not fit easily into Atkinson's (1984; 1986) model of the flexible firm. Individuals who have embodied or embrained skills are empowered and through that empowerment are able to use the labour market to their advantage (Albert et al., 1997).

## **6.2 *Flexibility***

Benner (2002) draws a distinction between flexible work and flexible employment relations. Much of the discussion in this paper is concerned with flexible employment relationships, the processes by which employers seek to direct motivate and monitor workers, the basis on which they are paid, and the nature of the contractual arrangement. Flexible work may be linked with flexible employment (ibid) and may in many circumstances be the root cause of the adoption of strategies that embrace flexible employment, but it is not a condition precedent for flexible employment.

### **Table 6 Aspects of flexibly labour markets from (Benner, 2002)**

<b>Work</b>	<b>Employment</b>
The actual nature of the activities done while engaged in the process of production	The informal and formal contractual relationship between worker and employer
<b>Aspects of flexible work</b>	<b>Aspects of flexibly employment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid change in quantity of work required</li> <li>• Rapid Change in skills, knowledge, information required for work</li> <li>• Reflexivity in work tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rise in external employment relationships (temporary, sub-contract labour)</li> <li>• Weakening of direct employment contract</li> <li>• Mediated management practices</li> </ul>

Atkinson's (1984) flexible firm<sup>2</sup> addresses the employment problem through three facets; functional flexibility, the ability of a firm to deploy employees between activities and tasks to match changing workloads; numerical flexibility, the ability of a firm to adjust the numbers of its employees to match market conditions; and financial flexibility, the ability to adjust labour rates to reflect market labour rates (Legge, 1995).

Core workers, in this conception, have functional flexibility; they are multi-skilled, and as a group their skill and training is vital to the future wellbeing of the organisation. That requirement sits uneasily with the work of Sennett (1998) who argues that the emphasis on flexibility in the work place might be economically sound, but, echoing Davis' (1966)

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<sup>2</sup> There is an important distinction between flexible specialisation and the flexible firm. Flexible specialisation is a reference to '*...labour market and labour market process restructuring, to increase versatility in design and the greater adaptability of new technology in production... Specialization relates to niche or custom marketing, the apparent "end of Fordism", mass production and standardization. Hence the concept unifies changes in production and consumption.*' Smith C. 1989. Flexible Specialization, Automation and Mass Production. *Work Employment and Society* 3(2): 203 -220(1989) quotation taken from Legge K. 1995. *Human Resource Management Rhetoric and Realities*. Palgrave: Basingstoke}

minimum intervention model, contradicts many of the traits of character, of loyalty, the pursuit of long term goals, commitment, trust and purpose which are the bed rock of modern high performance work systems.

Atkinson's model of the flexible firm considers labour market flexibility from the perspective of economic efficiency and is a response to the challenges of the external environment discussed in Section 5.4. A firm will commit to its core workers, from whom it expects flexibility in work, but will engage with its periphery workers only on a short term basis. The economic and institutional reasons why an employer should elect to train internally rather than to buy skilled staff have already been outlined. Atkinson's (1984; 1986) theory of the flexible firm might suggest a driver towards seeking staff from the market, or put another way, of transferring market risk to a significant proportion of the workforce.

Within the Atkinson model periphery workers come from the secondary labour market. This outer group of workers includes both the unskilled worker who might be recruited from an employment agency, effectively insourcing labour, functions which have been outsourced to contractors, and highly skilled freelance workers. Atkinson's middle ring is the site of numerical flexibility (Boxall et al., 2003 p 133). Here are two groups of workers, linked by their employers need for numerical flexibility, who either work on limited duration contracts or whose hours are flexed to accommodate demand; with, in the latter case, natural wastage providing additional flexibility.

There are many references to the flexibly firm in the literature, but the concept is not without criticism (see e.g. Pollert, 1988a, 1988b; Pollert, 1991) on the grounds that the concept was derived from generalisations derived from the behaviour of a small number of employing organisations (Felstead et al., 1999 p 4). Moreover, studies have shown that it was difficult to detect any strategic intent to move towards a flexible model of employment (Hunter *et al.*, 1991). Felstead and Jewson (1999) write that neither investigations of large scale data sets such as the labour Forces Survey in Britain (Dex *et al.*, 1995) and (Dex *et al.*, 1997), the US Population Survey (Polivka, 1996a, 1996b); nor surveys of employment, e.g. the UK's

Company Level Industrial Relations Survey (CLIRS, the Employers' Labour Use Survey (ELUS) and the Arbitration, Conciliation and Advisory (ACAS) Survey (Marginson, 1986, 1989; McGregor *et al.*, 1991, 1992); (ACAS, 1988; Hakim, 1990) point to anything more than a steady growth in non-standard forms of employment, and one which is neither dramatic nor radical. In a similar vein, but with a UK public sector focus (Coyle-Shapiro *et al.*, 2002) report that the use of contingent working is increasing modestly but decisively.

Given the limited evidence it is reasonable to suggest that the incidence of contingent work advances at a different pace in discrete economies, a conjecture advanced as fact by Brewster (2001) in his analysis of convergence and divergence of HRM practice. Further, Purcell (1998) suggests that the lack of evidence for strategies based on the flexible firm thesis might be attributable to delay between adoption of those strategies and the realisation of that adoption by researchers. There also remains a definitional issue of what amounts to strategy (Legge, 1995). Within Mintzberg's (1987) conception of an emergent strategy a pattern of activity followed over time indicates a strategic intent. Consequently it would be unwise to ignore the possibility of the flexible firm as an influence in the growth of the market for interim managers.

## **7 Insecurity**

The insecurity thesis has been widely debated. Broadly, there are two schools, the economic and the sociological. The economic school tends to favour narrow, 'objective', definitions of insecurity. Within this school, insecurity can be measured in terms of changes in job tenure, the use of temporary labour and employment legislation regulating the dismissal of employees (Heery *et al.*, 2000). The sociological school tends to consider a wider range of evidence, but, possibly in consequence, end up with definitions of insecurity which are too wide or fail to come to any definition at all (*ibid* p 12). This paper tends to the latter perspective but will consider two issues that undermine security, continuity of

employment (Allen *et al.*, 1997; Appelbaum, 1989; Capelli, 1995; Purcell, 2000); and insecurity in relationship to the income derived from that employment.

Job insecurity, previously the concern of those on the economies periphery (Baron *et al.*, 1984; Doeringer *et al.*, 1971; Piore, 1979), whether or not the belief was well-founded (Boxall *et al.*, 2003; Diebold *et al.*, 1997) has become a concern of the middle classes. The nineteen-nineties saw increased use of temporary employment in all sectors except distribution (Robinson, 2000). Notably, the highest growth has been in the public administration education and health services practice (ibid) sectors with a significant needs for Blackler's (1995) embrained knowledge workers. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the highest incidence of temporary work has been amongst professional workers (Robinson, 2000). In the wider environment managers and professionals were found to be more vulnerable than other workers as organisations tackled overhead costs and sought to push down responsibility to business unit level; (Capelli, 1999; Heckscher, 1994; Osterman, 1996).

The impression of increasing job insecurity is confirmed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's *Job Insecurity and Work Intensification Survey* (JIWIS). The JIWIS both establish that job insecurity was at its highest point since the Second World War (Giddens, 2001) and that the greatest increase in insecurity has been amongst non-manual workers (ibid). However, that conclusion is directly contradicted by Felstead *et al.*'s (1998) report that the work force was feeling no more insecure in 1997 than in the mid nineteen eighties. Felstead *et al.* based their conclusions on the answers given by samples of employees to identical questions on two surveys carried out in 1986 and 1997. In aggregate, "*job security, defined as the likelihood of losing your job or become unemployed in the next twelve months, had not risen significantly between those two dates*" (Robinson, 2000). However, the survey showed that there had been a significant increase in what Felstead *et al.* termed *employment insecurity*; the fear that it would be difficult to find acceptable alternative employment if a current job where lost.

There is empirical evidence to suggest that employees' concerns in relation to employment insecurity can be justified. Robinson (2000), citing Gosling (1997), reports that a high proportion of people who leave employment find less good jobs on their immediate return to the labour market. They frequently face wage cuts of 20% or more compared with a previous job, though the lost grounds is made up if the job is maintained or a better one found. Nevertheless, a period of reduced income would have significance for many particularly when domestic budgets are extended.

The shift in labour market perception from an internal labour market to one based on market forces, although that shift only affected a portion of the market has profound symbolic importance. Heery and Salmon (2000) argue that, at its most severe, this switch might be seen as the end of permanent career employment and its replacement with contingent contracts and mobile workers. But the means by which the labour market has been adjusted might be of equal importance. The effect on those who lose their jobs is self-evident, but attention is now being given to the effects of restructuring on the survivors (Turnball *et al.*, 2000). The evidence of "...*low-morale, declining commitment and productivity and growing mistrust towards management...*" (ibid) is compelling

In addition to fear of redundancy itself the JIWS identified two further dimensions to work force insecurity. Firstly, workers foresaw that at a time when the demands on them were increasing as organizations de-layered, opportunities for promotion and career enhancement were in decline. In consequence, workers thought that they were not only losing control of important aspects of their work, but also their overall career progression (Giddens, 2001).

The adjustments made by employers to their workforce cannot be told of only in terms of workforce reduction. More accurately, there was churn in the workforce as employers adjusted the skill mix within the organization. Lohr (2001) reports that members of the American Management Association were hiring two technical or professional workers for

every one they let go. In this readjustment, the bargain represented by the internal labour market, with its limited ports of entry to the system, was abandoned.

Within the employment relationship itself a trend has developed towards contingent remuneration and the greater use of performance linked pay in neither case being consolidated with basic pay nor forming part of 'pay' for pension entitlement (Capelli *et al.*, 1997; Heery *et al.*, 2000; Morgan *et al.*, 2000).

In summary, the new ways of organizing the working relationship went to the heart of that relationship. The nature of the work to be performed, the balance of the effort bargain and the reward for that bargain were all under attack.

The pressures inherent in the new working arrangements are not contained within the work environment. The insecurity of their work life spilled over and adversely affected workers personal lives (Giddens, 2001)

These issues, taken together, undermine the employment relationship. Moreover, these same employees, as a consequence of the labour strategies pursued by their employers, are exposed to frequent and regular contact with contract workers, many of whom will be perceived to be financially better off than typical employees. That contact was identified by Kunda *et al* (2002) as a key factor, when coupled with employee expertise and discontent in relation to their current position, in encouraging employees to enter the contract market.

## **8 Career development and employability**

There is a growing literature about the apparently new approaches to careers (Mallon, 1998), but an understanding of those careers is hampered by a lack of empirical evidence (*ibid*). Where research has been undertaken it, innocently, but nevertheless beguilingly, tempts the reader into making the assumption that US experience typifies the situation in the rest of the world e.g. (Kunda *et al.*, 2002; Lautsch, 2002; Mallon, 1998) is explicitly



linked to a national economy e.g. (Inkson et al., 2001; Lee, 2001); or to an industry sector e.g. Bahrani (1992), abridged in Maybey *et al* (1998); Benner (2002).

The issue of employability has been foregrounded in human resource thinking. The notion that employers have an obligation to build their employees career, or at least to provide an environment within which the employee has reasonable expectations of building a career, has been displaced by the idea that individuals must take responsibility for their own career development. This may be disquieting for employees within an employment situation that they perceive to be stable, and must certainly be of concern to atypical workers who must seek new engagements at regular intervals.

The movement of UK firms away from the internal labour market has been accompanied by the development of the concept of employability and the idea that career development is a matter for individual managers (Drucker, 1993 cited in Maybey *et al* (1998)). Given a hypothesis that employees have shifted the burden of skills development to employees, and a second hypothesis of a shift of employment status to contingent work; is the requirement of skills formation acknowledged within the individual career development plans of employees and contingent workers; and, if it is, how is the requirement met?

Within the literature the normative assumption has emerged that an individual's security will be anchored in their portable skills and employability, (Bridges, 1995; Kanter, 1989; Mirvis *et al.*, 1994). That assumption has only been partially explored by Mallon (1998) and remains to be tested, *inter alia*, in the specific market for interim managers, but nevertheless an understanding of the process by which portable careers might be developed is important to the current work.

Kanter (1989) distinguishes three forms of 'organisational principle' within which careers develop. Within the employment discourse the bureaucratic career, defined by Kanter as the logic of advancement, dominates. The professional career (Kanter, 1989) is bounded by craft or skill and by the achievement of occupational status through the monopolization of

socially valued knowledge. In this context 'reputation' is a key resource for the individual (Collin, 2001). Kanter's third category is the entrepreneurial career which develops '*through the creation of new value or new organisational capacity*' (Kanter, 1989).

The traditional view of career development expressed by Collin (2001) is that those with a bureaucratic career enjoy relative employment security, professionals function in the market place where they can sell their skills for what the market will stand, and entrepreneurs have what they can grow. Developments in the last quarter of a century have undermined the bureaucratic career whilst blurring the distinction between the professional and the entrepreneur. For many, the organization as the locality of a bureaucratic career will simply not exist. Organizations would have to look to the market for the skills they need, with all the potential difficulties that were discussed in considering the rationale for the internal labour market. For those engaged in what Arthur and Rousseau (1996) described as the boundaryless career, career development will need to embrace both the traditional concept of mastery of skill and function but also what Collin (2001) described, quoting from Hall and Associates, (1996), as a "*context of connection and mutual influence and benefit*".

## 9 The role of agency

Albert and Bradley (1997) characterised the labour market as a knowledge exchange within which the primary mode of information transmission is through agents or informally through networking. Any consideration of the market for interim managers should, therefore, also include consideration of those market institutions.

The relationship between agency, employer and interim manager is described as a '*distinctive characteristic*' of the transaction (Inkson et al., 2001). This finding can be contrasted with the United Kingdom experience of interim managers where Sambrook Research (2000) reported that only 43% of interim assignments were sourced through interim agents. The balance of assignments was obtained, per Sambrook, through self-marketing (46.6%) or through management consultants (9.9%). These differences may be

no more than differences in national markets. However, they may also reflect the way in which Inkson *et al's* (2001) research cohort was recruited (above). A preliminary conclusion is that agency intervention is only material where agencies are the recruiting medium.

An agency bias exists in the study of Kunda *et al* (2002)), whose research cohort worked in engineering or information technology and as such might more logically fall into the specialist segment of the atypical market of IT consultants. However, categorisation as technical experts would exclude this group from the interim market as defined in this paper.

The Kunda, Barley *et al* (2002) study was of 52 contractors of whom 5 were 'independent' defined, by implication, in the study, as contractors who are not employees of staffing agencies. Some caution should be exercised in reaching conclusions about this employment attribution, as the paper leaves no opportunity for sensemaking through which employment status may be gauged against a United Kingdom reference. However, the idea of employment, in the sense of being absorbed into an organisation on a contract of service but one which has limited duration presents a problem for this study. Within the conceptual framework adopted in this paper, the notion of employment by an agency will exclude the subject from the set 'interim manager' and, consequently outside the working hypothesis of this paper.

Albert and Bradley (1997) reject the notion that the market for expert professionals is driven by large companies. Instead they propose the intriguing possibility that experts, cognisant of their market value and wanting more discretion in their jobs will adopt atypical employment arrangements. However, they do not abandon the agent. They see the primary role of the agent in terms of marketing experts needs with unique compensation packages (Albert *et al.*, 1997). Agents filter and store information and create combinations that others, firms or experts, find difficult to emulate (*ibid*). Moreover, they play an important role in the development of competitiveness for '*individuals, business and nations*' (*ibid*).

Albert and Bradley advance a proposition that traditional firms disadvantage experts by clogging their ability to exploit their intellectual capital. Firms are unlikely to sell explicit knowledge to other firms (ibid p 76). Amongst other constraints, firms are unlikely to have a network capable of such a transaction (Ibid). In contrast, experts, through their association with agents, and their wider employment market network, can capitalise on their explicit knowledge. Consequently their interests are best served outside the boundaries of the traditional firm (ibid)

Clearly experts who choose to operate outside of the mainstream of employment need a forum through which they can market their skills. The obvious route to market, through agents or by direct marketing are supplemented by Albert and Bradley (1997) in their introduction of the internet as a market channel. Allen and Bradley characterize the internet as an agent, but it can equally be thought of as a means by which experts' network between themselves or as a market forum itself.

What is more interesting is, accepting an agency-direct employment dyad, what value do agents bring to the transaction? This question appears not to have been addressed in the literature.

## **9 Conclusions**

This paper has established an understanding of the interim market by describing that market and a hypothesis of the characteristics of the interim managers who work within it. We have sought to establish a context for that market by drawing on the history of the development of the employment market and employment relations, and in particular have outlined the development, purpose and eventual decline of the internal labour market. In doing so the contingencies have been established which, it is hypothesized, led to experience managers embarking on an independent career.

In addition it has been shown that the “atypical” employment market is multi segmented and it has been argued, within the segmentation, that interim managers can be separated from other professionals who work on temporary engagements by the nature of their skills.

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**Document 3**

**An ethnographic study**

# **Understanding the Interim Market**

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## Abstract

This document is an account of the first, pilot, stage of a wider ethnographic study which explores the phenomenon of interim management. Approaching the problem from the perspective of grounded theory, the study seeks to establish a theoretical perspective of interim management derived from the experiences of four senior interim managers. Each of those managers has at least seven years experience of work in the interim management sector.

The participants of the study are shown to have consciously decided that they wish to continue to work in the interim market in preference to alternative forms of employment. The participants distinguish themselves from other atypical management workers, and in particular “high level management temps” and other professional temporary staff, but there is no clear evidence that the group itself can be subdivided between interim executives and interim management. The participants also distinguished themselves from consultants.

Although interim managers may have specific technical skills, their primary skill is in general management. Notwithstanding the identification of that primary skill, interim managers seek to avoid the direct management of people.

The present study is inconclusive as to the role of agencies. However, it does indicate that the majority of assignments of the participants were obtained via interim management agencies.



# Introduction

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the interim management market. That market is a subset of the atypical employment market, a market which has seen a growth in recent years (Coyle-Shapiro *et al.*, 2002; Feltham *et al.*, 1999; Inkson *et al.*, 2001; Storey *et al.*, 2002; Uzzi *et al.*, 1998) particularly in large organizations (Feltham *et al.*, 1999) and in the public sector (Coyle-Shapiro *et al.*, 2002). Nevertheless, the specific market for interim managers has not been well researched (Tyrrell, 2004).

I have participated, an outcome of this research is that I am now cautious about using words like 'profession' or 'professional' to describe pursuing a career on an interim basis, in the interim market for over a decade. One consequence of that participation is that I approached this research with well developed ideas about the nature of the interim market and the hierarchical segmentation of the atypical employment sector. These views were at odds with much of the literature which tends to conflate managers employed by an organization, perhaps as part of a flexible employment strategy, on fixed-term contracts, with managers who have committed to providing their services to organisations on an interim basis (see e.g. Inkson *et al.*, 2001). Inkson *et al.*'s (2001) research also serves to illustrate the tendency within the literature not to distinguish between Blackler's (1995) embrained and embodied knowledge in its treatment of the management and professional end of the atypical employment markets. This unsegmented view of the market, which is reflected in official statistics (Purcell *et al.*, 1998), obscures an understanding of what has been described (Glover, 2002; Simms, 2003) as an increasingly important market sector.

My present research is concerned with establishing whether interim managers consider that it is appropriate to segment "interim management" from other professionals within the atypical market, or indeed whether "interim manager" itself describes a single market segment, how individual managers manage their career, whether individual managers would prefer to pursue their career through traditional employment, and the role of agencies in the interim markets.

The research reported in this paper is a pilot study intended to inform a quantitative study to be undertaken later in this year and a later, but more extensive, quantitative study, in each case undertaken with the intention of gaining an understanding of the interim management phenomenon.

An-depth-survey (Remenyi *et al.*, 1998) was undertaken by interviewing four senior interim managers. The selection criteria within the group of potential participants was that they must have participated in the contract market for at least seven years, must have undertaken a variety of assignments at a senior level, and must be reasonably available within the period allocated to the research. This latter condition resulted in a south east England bias to the work and excluded contacts who are currently working overseas, and those who were in the first few weeks of a new assignment.

The original research specification suggested that between five and nine participants should be asked to give interviews. In the event, although there is a remarkable richness in the transcripts, which in itself will warrant further research, there was significant consistency in the responses which relates to the research agenda outlined in the preceding paragraph. Consequently, the first phase of this research, which is reported in this paper, was restricted to four interviews.

## Choosing the research method

From the outset I have been concerned about the need to produce an interview schedule for this research. The process of a semi structured interview as described by May (1997) has many similarities with the process of an examination of a witness by a lawyer, a process with which I'm familiar from my former profession, although it is hoped that the researcher will not be an advocate for the research agenda.

The purpose of the interview schedule is to place a boundary around the research. Within that boundary, the researcher and the participant are free to seek clarification and elaboration of

both the question contained in the schedule and the participant's response. The structure imposed by the interview schedule enables the interviewer to pursue the research agenda, but, at least partially, constraints the richness of the interview to the development of the researcher's agenda

My original interview schedule reflected the research agenda previously outlined in this paper. I am grateful to John Leopold for his suggestion to restructure the interview schedule to reflect the life cycle of an interim manager. Reflecting on that advice gave me the opportunity to restructure the research by adopting the life history technique (May, 1997). Within that technique the interview takes the form of gathering the biographical and oral history of the participants. Using the interview schedule, itself reorganized to progress from the participant's pre-interim career to the present time, to provide structure, participants were encouraged to describe their career history and their reflections on the interim markets.

My second major concern is that of my relationship with the interviewees. This concern takes two forms. The first is whether my relationship with the participants might taint the information they were prepared to disclose during interview. Secondly, I was, and remain, concerned about the possibility of isomorphism. I will deal with each of those concerns individually.

The interim management market, at least as it is emerging from this series of studies, is a relatively small world. There is a possibility that interviewees might work with me, or even might work for me, on an assignment in the future. Given that possibility, there was at least the risk, inherent in the process of interview, that they might provide answers which they consider to be appropriate in the circumstances, rather than answers which reflected their own opinion. Interim managers are adept at dealing with what Watson (2002) described as identity management. Indeed, the research eventually undertaken illustrated that idea, in that interviewees discussed the management of their CVs, the key marketing document in this sector, to project the most marketable profile. In the event, participants appeared to show no hesitancy in advancing their opinions. However, those opinions were, in the context of the research agenda, remarkably homogenous.

The similarity of views expressed by participants, and the consistency of those views with the baggage which I brought to the research suggests further inquiry. The participants and I have similar backgrounds. I have worked with each of the participants on at least one assignment, and some of them have worked with each other. We are by the definition established in this paper, senior interim managers. We all lived and, predominantly, work in the south east of England. By most objective standards, and certainly by any material standards, the group, in which I include myself, can be judged to be successful in their chosen career. However, it may be that the opinions expressed in interview arise from the isomorphic effect of the group's common background and experience. Having admitted this possibility, tentative arrangements have been made with a Leeds based interim management agency to carry out similar life history research with interim managers who they represent and with whom I have no previous connection.

The close relationship that I enjoy with the research cohort has a number of positive attributes. The first is that of access, all those asked to participate in this research agreed to do so. When they were, in fact, interviewed they participated enthusiastically, and whether interviewed or not, have agreed to take part in further phases of the research. Access meets the first of Kahn and Cannell's three criteria for successful interviews (Kahn *et al.*, 1983 cited in ; May, 1997). Kahn *et al.*'s second criteria, cognition, was assisted by the pre-existing relationship which engendered an understanding of the reason why the research was undertaken and an understanding of the participants role in achieving the research outcomes. This last factor went some way to meeting Kahn *et al.*'s third criteria, motivation. At least one participant, paradoxically the most senior of the participants, expressed himself to be flattered by being asked to take part in the research. Further, May (1997) suggests that allowing the participant latitude in the way in which they answer questions encourages motivation. That latitude is inherent in the life history approach adopted in this research.

A second positive attribute of my relationship with the research cohorts was that I am "a part of the tribe" (Remenyi *et al.*, 1998). Ethnographic research requires the researcher to become involved to some degree with the research subject. Gold's (1969 cited in ; May, 6

1997) typology of fieldwork roles suggests that the lack of a lasting contact inherent in the role of an observer as participant, the role of an interviewer, might generate misunderstandings due to an unfamiliarity with the culture and the language employed. Because of my long term relationship with the research cohort my position was analogous to a complete participant. But unlike Gold's complete participant, interviewees were aware of the purpose of my participation in the interview process. However, neither they nor I were able to entirely divorce my personal biography from the research agenda. My interview with Edward illustrates this relationship. On a number of occasions he assumed camaraderie, born of our long relationship, illustrated by the following transcript extracts:-

- In a discussion rooted in the reasons why Edward, who has a technical background, consciously distinguishes himself from the I. T. contracting market, Edwards said:-

*"...because I didn't want to be associated with the IT market any more, as a stock-in-trade I did not want to be labelled an IT contractor. You recall [from a conversation he and I had had in 1998!] my opinion of people who jumped on the year 2000 bandwagon and my predictions for the IT market which all proved to be true"*

- Moving on to a discussion about corruption, a topic discussed with each participant in the context of ethical issues but not pursued in this paper, he commented, in what might be considered to be a slur on the Banking Community *"I mean, you and I have both worked for an investment bank, we know what we're talking about."*
- And in an entertaining, but more than slightly defamatory, diatribe about agents and some of the people who work for them, Edward concluded, *"...but I have a problem with attitude I've a problem with avarice. I have singled them out, and they're not alone, and it's not fair to do that, I'm sure you won't name them in your paper"*

This assumption of a collegiate relationship, of them and us, pervaded all the interviews undertaken for this research. It was reflected in both what was said and in the tacit

understanding, explicitly referred to by Edward, of confidence in my integrity as one of the club; and was a positive aspect of the close relationship between researcher and participants.

## Selecting the research cohort

Although the introduction to this paper contains an outline of a research agenda particularized into specific questions, it is only lately that I have been able to think of this research in such a detailed way. In fact the research agenda set out in the introduction to this paper is only a convenient way of placing a boundary around, making manageable, particular work within the wider objective of gaining an understanding of interim management and the interim management market.

This uncertainty had implications for the selection of the research cohort. In a sense the selection of the research cohort followed the garbage can model of March and Olson (1989), there was a perceived relationship between the problem of gaining an understanding of the interim management market, and of interim managers, and the choice of a research cohort. For the reasons already discussed, the benefits of drawing participants for research from a group of interim managers with whom I already had a relationship outweighed the benefits which might be derived from a more scientific selection of participants. The rationale for this decision was partly founded in grounded theory. Following the approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss (1987) in each case cited in Robson (1993) the purpose of the initial sampling was to provide a foundation, a theoretical base, which would inform subsequent sampling

The question of availability was also important. *Inkson et al's* (2001) research could be criticized on the grounds that they had drawn the entire research cohort from a single agency. From experience I was aware that agencies have strict selection criteria, and that there is the likelihood that interim managers drawn from a single agency might exhibit similar characteristics, or least characteristics which enabled them to pass their agency's selection criteria. The solution to this problem which presents itself was to use my own interim

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management career as the selection criteria. In the last decade I have worked with a number of interim managers on different assignments that have come to those assignments from a variety of agents, and in some cases directly, without agency intervention.

## Issues of generalization

The purpose of this study is not to produce generalizations about interim managers or of the market within which they operate. There is a tendency in quantitative research to seek generalizations from research material (Newman *et al.*, 1998). That tendency may be reflected in Wolcott's (1990) suggestion that the date should be "ditched" as you home in on the topic (May, 1997), or in the detailed methods of qualitative data analysis described e.g. by Miles and Huberman (1994). Rather than attempt to derive a spurious degree of analytical accuracy in attempting to turn the qualitative to the quantitative through detailed textual analysis this paper adopts a phenomenological approach to the data. To a large measure the extracts from the interview transcripts will speak for themselves. Nevertheless there is a structure through the data represented by the general thrust of the interview schedule and the data has been located within that structure so that structure is reflected in the way the data is presented. Where I have felt it appropriate, and particularly in discussions, I have followed Wolcott's (1990) advice to make my point through a summary of the data.

Although there is homogeneity in the responses to the research agenda by the participants, those responses should be placed in the contingencies of the respondents' careers and of their experiences as interim managers. Watson (2001) warns of the danger of making empirical generalizations from ethnographic data.

A key function of ethnographic research is the development of theory. In the context of grounded theory, theory is developed by describing what happens and then formulating explanations about why it happens. (Lincoln *et al.*, 1985; Newman *et al.*, 1998; Patton, 1990) That explanation may be at the individual, why this, or those, particular individuals act or acts in the way outlined, and an assessment of the likelihood of comparable individuals or groups

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acting in a similar way (Le Compte *et al.*, 1982) , or at what Watson (2001) describes as the “process level”, theorizing about such matters “...as *the role of angst, emotion and managerial politics in managerial work.*”

## **The biographies of the participants**

If the presentation of four transcripts of interviews is to be avoided there is inevitably some reduction in context in the presentation of the selections from the transcripts. The short biographies which follow are intended to provide some context for the analysis of the transcripts which is undertaken in this paper.

To preserve confidentiality, the names of participants have been changed.

### ***Edward Johnson***

Edward has seventeen years experience in contingent employment. Much of that experience has been in the information systems market where he is an experienced programme director. He has worked on many prestigious projects in a wide variety of industries. By background he is a procurement specialist. Probably the most senior of the interim managers interviewed within this research, certainly if seniority is measured by fee income. In addition to function as an interim manager, Edward uses his procurement experience to find assignments for other interim managers.

### ***Michael Peters***

Michael is a former army officer who after leaving the army took a fulltime MBA course. Following a relatively short period as a manager in the aerospace industry he was made a redundant and has worked in the interim management market ever since. He has about twelve years experience in that market. He is primarily involved in the delivery of change programs in technical environments. He originally trained as an electrical engineer.



**David Smith**

David is a senior HR manager. Prior to his entry into the interim management market he worked in a major clearing bank, where his last assignment was in the chairman's H.R strategy group. He has worked in interim management for something like a decade. His assignments have been predominantly in the public sector.

**Peter Jones**

Peter is a chartered management accountant who has also worked in IT and equality. He is known as a process expert amongst his colleagues. Prior to entering the interim market, which he did about a decade ago, Peter worked for BT on a number of change programs.

I am the final participants in this research. I have a background in legal practice and in management education. I have worked for the last decade as an interim manager, initially in project recovery, but more recently in major change programs and in I S. strategy. My specialization is working at the interface of people, processes and technology to ensure efficient systems, in the wider sense of the word, delivery. I have worked with each of the participants in that period.

**What is an interim manager?**

Simms, inspired by one of the leading market makers in the sector Martin Woods of the agency BIE, defined an interim manager as:

*'Interim managers are experienced, confident operators who can step in at extremely short notice to cover gaps in company hierarchies or to manage specific ventures or restructuring. They work at or near board level and are given the authority to make changes'* (Simms, 2003)

I have already noted the tendency to conflate the various categories of professional temporary work. In my previous paper (Tyrrell, 2004) I had argued that it was appropriate to segment the market for atypical management using, inter alia, Blackler's (1995) typology of knowledge. Within that typology I hypothesized that interim managers were more likely to fall into the embrained category, whereas many professionals who are engaged by employers on a temporary basis are likely to have been embodied skills. Perhaps a better descriptor would be Leonard-Barton's (1988) notion of "T shaped skills". Leonard-Barton argues that professional skills are task orientated. Management might require those professional skills, but also requires skills which enable the manager to reach across specialisms.

A key objective of this paper is to establish whether it is right to seek a typology of atypical management. That objective will be addressed by using the voices of the research participants to answer six questions:

- Is there a difference between interim executives and interim managers?
- Are all temporary managers interim managers?
- How are consultants different from interim managers?
- Are interim managers the same as contractors?
- What skills do interim managers have?
- Do interim managers manage people?

### ***Is there a difference between interim executives and interim managers?***

The CBI Business Guide to Interim executives (BEI/CBI) introduces the term "interim executive" and suggests that there are only 'a few hundred' practitioners. Cain of the agency BIE puts the numbers at 'fewer than a thousand' (Cain, 2002). Can the interim market be segmented in this way?

My starting point in this discussion is Edward's interview in which he addressed the issue through a discussion of Directors service contracts he argues:-

*"...some of the board will be people who have come up through the business or similar businesses in the industry and also some, and not necessarily just the non-execs, some of the others would have been hired from outside. They will come in, they would have personal contracts, the personal contracts might be two three four or five or however many years. How is that different to an interim? It's different to an interim because in their minds, and in the minds of the Business, they are something called employees, but practically speaking, lots of things are very, very, similar to an interim signing a long-term interim contract"*

In dealing with the appointment of interim directors to quoted companies, Edward does not see these as market transactions at all. He says:

*"That [ the appointment of an Interim CEO or Chairman] probably not definitely, but probably is informal and comes through the old boy network, school, who you went to school with, who you were in the military with, who you're in government with civil-service whatever. It's a sort a safe pair hands, they've known him forever, been here there and everywhere, will come in and he'll do. And that type of role doesn't, doesn't, lend itself easily to the generality of the so-called provider market where the provider is actually, generally not operating at that level.*

*"[...] very, very high level head hunter search organisation may be appointed to find an interim C E O for the struggling Corporation whatever, but is not usual. It's becoming more commonplace because, more than anything else, we have more formality, we have more due diligence in the way things are operated more regulation and, if you take a financial-services company simply picking someone off the street because he went to the school with the chairman is not necessarily the best way of*

*hiring somebody. So then you are getting more formality into that area them have had in the past have put but it was still not be the absolute norm [...]*

*“the appointment of the CEO to Woolworth]...is not the norm, is not even an interim executive, it's informal, it's above the market, not part of the market. People operating at that level, generally speaking there are few exceptions; people operating at that level are board directors going from job to job.”*

In response to a question whether interim executive is something different to an interim manager, Peter said:

*“Interesting question. It depends on which way you want to do it. I don't think so? I suppose the nearest I got to what I would call an interim executive was when I worked in [...] in Ireland because [...] wanted revenue assurance for their telecommunications. They didn't understand what it was, so they therefore felt that they wanted a Director of Revenue Assurance. By the time the nine months of the contract was completed they just wanted a revenue assurance department of two or three people and all the information was already in the business; it was just a matter of tapping into it. In, during that time I would say I was the nearest you'd get to an interim executive. Because, the company thought it was a board position I found myself sitting at Board meetings, not as a Director, but representing what this Department was going to be and it was I who worked my way done to downgrade it as part of the, what I considered to be, the finance function at the end of the day.*

*I suppose you could say yes there is, if your going to be an interim board member, but, but I would argue in favour...there isn't much difference... but probably if you were going to be a member of the Board for a short period of time....*

This reluctance to accept a distinction between executive and manager, although not universal, Michael placed executives at or near board level, was a theme in the interviews.

To emphasis the point David was almost dismissive of the distinction and in saying “*You know*

*it [BIE Cain's agency] would attempt to differentiate between true interiming on the one hand and a high-level management temp on the other"* placed all interims in the executive category, and then segmenting that market from others who provide management services on a temporary basis. Peter was equally dismissive. He saw the idea of an interim executive as no more than a label, part of a tendency towards "grade inflation", intended to boost the importance of a candidate. He said:

*"...they are labels primarily for the same thing. If one looks at the IT contracting market, the management side of the IT contracting market then you see a very clear hierarchy there, or pseudo hierarchy of the various project roles which are defined in Prince. And then you get project manager, programme manager or portfolio manager and so on all. And what, we could digress for hours on this one, what happens when you get a recession in the IT area is that anybody whose a project manager starts calling themselves a programme manager in effort to boost their importance and go after work, because there's not enough project work; programme managers in an effort to maintain some sort of distinction start to call themselves directors and so on and so forth and you get this odd sort of behaviour where people label themselves with institutional, employees, labels though they are selling a service"*

## Discussion

Clearly the majority of participants do not see a material difference between interim executives and interim managers. However, Michael's views ought not to be dismissed out of hand as the difference between his view and the view of the others may be no more than a matter of interpretation. The reluctance to perceive a distinction was all the more remarkable as I knew that each of the participants, but to a greater extent in the case of Edward and David, undertook assignments at or near board level, the territory staked out by the interim executive label. Equally, common it may be that the use of the word "executive" in the context of interim management by the CBI and by Cain (Cain, 2002) may simply be an

attempt by them to bring into the market that which Edward defined as being above the market.

An interesting outcome from this discussion was David's reference to high level management temps. His implicit suggestion was that an interim management assignment was something more than a temporary engagement to deal with a staffing difficulty.

### ***Are all temporary managers interim managers?***

Although Simms (2003) definition of interim management includes a function of "covering gaps" in the hierarchy and that function was consistent with the origins of interim management identified by Golzen (1992) I was not consciously looking in this research to draw out that distinction. The research participants had very different ideas. They were both anxious to distinguish themselves from "temporary hires" of this sort and disparaging of those who provide this service. David's comment was typical:

*"I see there's a difference between an interim, which is that there is something specific which needs to be addressed within an organisation, you know, a change programme, a merger, a downsizing, a restructuring, culture change or something for which there is a particular rump of activity over and above what the organisation, of the ongoing management of business the organisation, had staff for on the one hand and on the other hand and a management temp, you know— well the FD's left so we were just get in an accountant and balance the books before we find somebody else"*

Edward acknowledges the distinction in the market between what he describes as the high end and management tempt:

*"The concept of interim really carries two connotations, the connotations which the market, i.e. the agencies like to sell, the high end, a bit akin to the high level skills in the IT contracting market, whereby you buy an interim executive and he comes in and leads change, leads strategic thinking, does stuff for you which you perhaps are not*

*able to do yourself and then there's the other side of it, which is probably the more conventional the meaning of interim management which is plugging a gap, a pregnancy gap or on holiday or a sacking [...]"*

*[...]*

And a further distinction which segments out skilled knowledge qualification based activities:

*[...] You also have a lot of greyness when you look at the professions, accountancy, legal, procurement. There are certain very, very, definitive skilled knowledge qualification based activities that are called interim but they aren't interim. They are contractors. If you're hiring a dozen accountants to fill a dozen roles in your accountancy department because you haven't got the accountants [...] then you're hiring on an interim basis accountants, the basis of the agreement is a contract; but to call them interim managers it is a misnomer because they're not interim managers, they're jobbing accountants.*

*[...]*

In describing high level management temps, Edward said:

*[...] but the high level management temp is, I believe, characteristic of the guy who may be out to work for 10 years but is characteristic of the guy who's still looking for the next permanent job. Yeah, who feels, I surmise, feels hard-done-by by the fact that he was kicked out of his previous employment for whatever reason and, you know, was sent on an outplacement course which taught him all about interim management and he'd been doing it ever since just waiting for the next opportunity to come along, and, you know, lands in the organisation with the promise of great things, and, as you say, high-level mission temp he tries to assimilate himself make himself indispensable, making everybody love him"*

## Discussion

The distinction between interim management on one hand and high level management temping on the other hand was made by all participants, and was made with considerable force. There is, perhaps, a process point to be made here. Generally, participants did not see themselves as being part of a profession “interim management”. They were emphatic that they run their own business and those businesses provided services, usually through utilizing the interim’s skill set alone, but, and particularly in Edward’s case, through procuring a range of skills needed to meet the clients needs. Within that offer assignments were almost invariably structured as a project, if only, as Edward said, for tax reasons. For all four, a typical assignment would contain at least three phases, engagement, reassessment, and delivery:

- The engagement phase is very much the sales phase. At the engagement interview the interim would listened to and would capture the clients idea of the nature of the problem presented. Each of the participants said that at this stage they would tell the client that they would spend two or three weeks on site reviewing the situation and at the end of that period would report back with a detailed brief and recommendation for action.
- During the first two to three weeks of an assignment the participants said that they reassess the problem presented by the client and prepare a plan of action. At the end of the reassessment period, the participants present their findings to the client and agreed a way forward. That way forward is almost inevitably structured as a project.
- Having agreed a way forward, the project moves to the implementation stage.

This phased way of engagement would not sit well with an assignment the purpose of which was to replace, in Edwards’s words, Janice:

*“when Janice is pregnant, Janice has gone off to have a baby, and Janice will be returning six months after she’s had her baby and they’ve really, really, want a*



*caretaker. You do not rifle Janice's draws while she's away. You do not upset her staff, and you know, they call that interim management! No, that's temping, that's a managerial temping job and I am totally inappropriate for those. You know, I'm just, I couldn't cope with it mentally, I just, my brain would explode".*

Each of the participants recognized corporate restructuring both as an opportunity for their businesses, and as a threat to their livelihood. Corporate restructuring inevitably brought senior executives to the employment market. In times of economic difficulty, those senior executives might turn to interim management or interim management as they see it. These repeated influxes to the market tended both to reduce the rates for work and to create an image that interim managers were only managers between jobs.

In fact, it was an economic downturn which caused all but Edward's entry into the market, and even he became an interim following a negotiated exit from his then employer. Each of the participants' reasons for entering the market will be discussed below, but for the present purposes David's entry into the market illustrates the point to be made:

*"So that was the reason for the exodus. If the other part of the question is why did I go into interim, if I can predict that question, it was by chance. I was getting outplacement support, and part of the outplacement, a bit of advice which came from the outplacement consultant was if a temp job comes along, because Interiming 9 years ago was only just beginning to emerge onto the lexicon of employment types. The view was that could be helpful, firstly it gets some money coming in, secondly it can often lead to a permanent job, and thirdly its easier to get a job while you're in employment rather than get employment when you're not in employment. So the first thing which came up was an interim role which I got through networking, the old adage [...] and it was almost on a day to day basis, no job security whatsoever, but it did mean something quite specific and tangible to address that I found I enjoyed and I was happy to take it on a temporary basis."*

Clearly at this stage in his career David was a refugee within Granger *et al's* (1995) typology discussed below. Later he was to become a missionary within that typology but many fail to make the transition, and, as suggested by Edward, whilst working in the temporary market, continue to yearn for the previous existence. This type of contractor, Edward suggests, when he obtains an assignment try's to assimilate himself into the organization so as to be perceived to be "*part of the furniture*" with the consequent possibility of a longer, and perhaps permanent, engagement.

It might be thought from the description of the process of engagement that the participants ran consultancy businesses. That suggestion was rejected out of hand by all of them.

### ***How are consultants different from interim managers?***

Each of the participants has strong views about the role of Consultants, the value that Consultants gave to organizations, and how interim management services differed from the services provided by Consultants. Broadly, the participants saw interims in the context of a whole project engagement within which the objective was to maximize benefit to the Client. Consultants on the other hand were seen to dip in and out of assignments, perhaps spending time at the interesting conceptual stage and then leaving the complexity of implementation to the client. Other key differentiators were built around personal relations, felt to be important in time of change and a perception that consultants had a conflict of interest between the needs of their practice to maximize revenue and the needs of the Client to maximize benefit. These views came across in series of quite animated exchanges:

Peter:

JAT      *"How would you distinguish between consultancy and interim management?"*

Peter    *"I think Interim Managers are keen to get the job done, get it done, get it sorted out solve the problem and they get their additional work by being successful. Now it might be I— consultancy to me is , it's almost like trying to*

*hang onto the job and the work too; I mean I had the consultants in, in [...], this was [...], they were politely told within six months that I'd done more in six months than a team of their people had done in inside a year. And it had really been down to the fact that they had been going through bit by bit when it was quite possible to sort of dig in; take a ...I suppose, the way I would liken it is almost to a sort of human body illness that needs to be cut out, lets get it out, lets get it sorted with, sort the patient out; whereas sort of from a consultancy point of view its almost like 'well yeah its a cancer but lets see there could be 15 of them so lets start a discussion on which one it is. It might sound jaundiced of me, but I just feel sometimes that [they see] the job is not to get in and get out, the job is to get in, solve the problem and generate more and more from it. I think that's, that's the difference and it's also a hands on role, sleeves rolled up.*

*"I think also we as interim managers have to be everything, which means you start from one end and you deliver at the other end whereas in consultancy you'll have teams of people, so they'll have a set in to sort this bit out then they'll put somebody else in, or another group in, so they're not there from the start to the end."*

JAT     *"and that's important"?*

Peter   *"Well yes it is; because I, I think in the consultancy wing you've got different- you've got the partner coming in at this level, right, and the reality of life is that they're looking to create and generate work. [...]"*

David

JAT.    *"Do you distinguish between interim management and consultancy?"*

David. Yes. *"There's two or three strands. Consultants will probably disagree with some of it.*

*"Firstly, the interim will tend to work for one organisation at the time, typically, whereas the consultant will work for more than one at a time as a generalism. so that they [interims] have got to be commitment to the organisation they are working with rather than to a number of directions, Consultants are pulled in a number of directions.*

*"Secondly, the interim works, directly for, the client and providing a response for what the client is looking for is his total motivation as opposed to not also having to have the interest of the organisation he works and the possibilities of on selling or responding to any specific approaches or indeed processes marketed by the consultancy that would influence how he would direct his attention to the client, or service the client-- so that would be the second area.*

*"Thirdly, I think that an interim would get closer to the organisation than a consultant would. Where does the consultant end and the manager begin? It's all about shades of grey as I see it. But the interim is for more likely to get embedded in the organisation whilst keeping a degree of distance, a point I was making before and be as much engaged in the implementation of an initiative as opposed to just giving guidance on the direction of strategy, the strategic components of an initiative"*

Michael

Michael *"I differentiate a consultant as somebody who produces lots of waffle. An interim, I say takes his jacket off, rolls his sleeves up, and is involved at if the nitty-gritty the level as well as taking, maybe, a strategic role as well. But he's got to be able to focus in and manage some of the operational issues if that is his particular tasks to do so."*

Edward

Edward *"What you should get, lets put in those terms, if you hire an interim what you should get it is an individual. What you may get it is an individual whose got mates and will bring his mates along to help which may be a good thing, you may be pleased you are hiring an a individual who it is going to bring, as interim MD of a small part of your company, and he's going to bring his mate from finance and his mate from IT, and his mate from sales with him to sort the mess out. That might be OK for, you might get the team for the price of one although you will be paying for all of them. But generally speaking, if you hire an interim you're getting an individual, you're getting an individual who should pride himself on his, or her, personal commitment professionalism, loyalty to you as an employer of their services not an employer per say, somebody who's going to tell you the truth, somebody who's going to deliver what you want to be delivered it it's deliverable if it's not a deliverable who's actually going to say to you are wasting your time and you money.*

*"So you're getting a whole different kettle of fish you're not buying an organisation whose primary objective is to turn you into a cash cow. You're buying an individual whose primary objective is to be successful, the beneficiary of which is you because you're acknowledgement of their success is potentially their next meal ticket. So, a fundamental difference, a fundamental difference you're buying in an individual not an organisation I guess is the bottom line. And you buy all sorts of things with the individual I believe which you don't get with a consultant".*

JAT *"and the implication?"*

Edward *"and I think integrity is the top of the list, probably".*

JAT *“the implication of what you said is that consultancies are working another agenda.”*

Edward *“no doubt about it, no doubt about it. I mean if you hire an interim from a consultancy the probability is it he would have 95 per cent of the characteristics of an interim rather than the characteristics of a consultancy. If you hire a consultant from consultancy, first of all you can't, you can't do that, you want consultancy you go to a partner, the partner decides what you going to get. The partner doesn't say to you okay I'll send in three guys for you to interview and you can have one of those. The probability of that happening is very thin although it does happen, and it happens on the basis of a bridgehead, a land and expand exercise. But, I mean consultancy, their sole motivation is land and expand. That's what it's about. An interim... while an organisation is rationalising the last thing the last thing you'd do is bring a consultancy in to do it because all you do is you'd end up in reducing your head count from 100 to 50 but you end up a 50 consultants doing the work of 25 of the 50 you got rid of for four times the price, is just the nonsense”.*

## Discussion

It might be thought that the views expressed by the participants are extremely jaundiced. Consultants might very well say that “well they would say that wouldn't they”, after all we are in competition for similar business, but the radically different business model, when you engage the services of an interim you buy a very senior individual, when you engage the services of a consultant you buy into their resource bench, the selection from which will be made not by you but by a partner, brings into question the idea of competition. Moreover, both Peter and I have experienced clients who have bought out pre-existing contractual arrangements, in my case from a big four consultancy, then part of the Client's auditor, who had sourced the assignment for me, because the client perceived the possibility of a conflict of interest..

## ***Are Interim managers the same as contractors?***

Universally the participants distanced themselves from contractors, this despite the fact that each of the participants had a technical background and the necessary skills to work within the IT contracting market. In a real sense contractors were bracketed with high level management temps, distinguishably by their specific identifiable skills and their attitude to the host organization. Peter comments:-

*"I think some people, some organisations, are into what they call contractors, contractors come, I believe from the IT market, is the term for contracting, but I think a contractor is someone who works within the business as if they were an employee, its just another job to be done, and so they find themselves within a reporting structure doing a job and its almost like we've got some people who are not really our staff but they're as good as and in fact in some companies. [...], the culture is such that a contractor is considered, I would go so far as to say the lowest of the low, not my term but these are the attitudes of the organisation. [...] If your in contracting, you likely to come up against lots of problems whereas if you in Interim Management, its, you are a hired person for a period of time doing a particular, I wouldn't even call it a job, call it a set of objectives, they want something they want an end result and your almost measuring yourself off on that end result. If you're not careful with a contractor you could end up with the fact of. "I could be here a long, long time and become part of the furniture". Whereas, I always think in terms of interim management that I'm in there doing a particular job, when that jobs done I shall go unless the senior management might want something else done"*

## ***What skills do interim managers have?***

Each of the participants had in-depth specialist skills, but surprisingly it was not those skills that they say made them most marketable. The most often mentioned competencies were general management skills, analytical skills, and flexibility. What they looked for in

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assignments above all else, Edward illustrated this to me by showing me two assignments he had been asked to apply for, the highest paid one had the least interest to him and it was the one he intended to reject, was, paradoxically clarity of what was needed to be achieved, and a challenge in achieving it.

David, a highly experienced HR practitioner put it that he markets himself *“rather as a very broad generalism with strong suits within that generalism”*.

Peter put the skills issue in the following way:-

Peter *“I think its got to be look at another way in the concept of flexibility of skill. I think first of all interim managers tend to; I find in doing work a lot of things which I credit as being common sense is not necessarily the thing, its a number of years of, of experience. A lot of people sort of say and I've come to the conclusion over the last year or two that its not really common sense, its a, its a bit... of years of experience ah and if you were actually to sort of say well how do you get it, I suppose there's a bit of common sense in it, but its experience, its flexibility, you know, its.. I suppose if your in your late twenties, early thirties there's a lot of people who, if they move into a, particularly something slightly different it can be a bit challenging and a bit daunting. I think when you get to late forties early fifties nothing particular would be so;, its different and its challenging and go and grab it and use your 20 or 30 years of skills and your flexibility and there's no wrong or right answer. I think that's another thing. It's looking at the problem, analysing the problem coming up with the various solutions and selecting. eh so that's where I think interim managers are built from.*

JAT *So does that imply- flexibility- does that imply they tend to be generalists or that they, they can be generalists?*



Peter *They can be or they, they have— they can be or I would say they have one or two key skills which they are able to apply elsewhere so its almost like general principles of management applied in a number of areas and therefore they will thrive in those companies that understand those sort of concepts as opposed to highly technical, this is a technical type problem, most problems are not technical type at all they all revolving around management disciplines and management problems.*

JAT *So the implication, so that I understand, is that you might need in depth technical skills in a particular area but you also need a broader set of skills?*

Peter *Yes, you need a broader set of skills so you can bring other skills so, I get involved in analytical process type of work so I bring to the skills an accounting background and having worked in a bit of IT ay one time quality assurance and project management. They all combine to, to create ...I think a lot of added value. It's almost the sum of whole is worth more than, is more than, the whole if you know what I mean so its  $1+1 = 2 \frac{1}{2}$  to 3*

## Discussion

It might come as something of a surprise that these highly skilled senior practitioners see themselves largely as management generalists. It's as if they value the cross bar of Leonard-Barton's (1988) T shaped configuration more than the in-depth skills which their "home" profession would have endowed them with. However, these are collectively very senior managers and this characteristic may be no more than the need of successful senior managers to leave their specialisations behind as their span of control increases. It might also be said that, by the nature of their nomadic careers the participants have been exposed to a wider set of experiences, and thus had a greater opportunity to hone their general management skills than managers who have pursued a more settled career. This general point was made by David:

*What we learn in any situation there as a normal curve distribution, is not a normal curve. What's the curve I want? This is not going to come out and your machine [draws an exponential growth curve]. Current role is a graph that does that and that learning over time. I stayed in my first management job for 15 years, which is crass stupidity. Because although there were new situations, rehouse the factory it was growing, specific drive to remove a trade union which we did, what I was learning between the 14th and 15th year of that job was very, very, little. So continuing to put yourself, expose yourself, to a new and issues is going to escalate your growth.*

Allied to the idea of competencies, the overriding flavour of the interviews is that the participants were very goal orientated. They had a need to reduce assignments to a clearly defined set of objects which they could deliver. At the end of each interview each participant was asked what made a good assignment and what were the attributes of a good interim. David's response to these questions was typical of the group:

JAT *in your view what makes a good interim?*

David *Breadth of experience, a mindset which is comfortable with change, interest in an ability in absorbing and get an understanding of difference cultures organisations and the way they work and ability to respond to serve as a response and flexibility issue. Highly important and very it interpersonal skills and I think that's about building relationships as much as it is about influencing. Planning, propensity to plan their ability to plan and finally an achievement focus. I've missed a bit out in all of that which is about, its a cognitive skill, which is about strategic thinking, and analytical skills ...OK*

JAT *probably my final question, what makes a good assignment?*

David *one that the subject matter is very interesting where there's a degree of challenge where there's something so very substantial to achieve a whether or not it as been clearly defined beforehand so that there is a real sense of*

*satisfaction at the end of it. Where there is willingness of the organisation to respond and to change.*

## ***Do interim managers manage people?***

The surprising answer might be no, not if they can help it. It was a recurring theme in all the interviews that, whereas each of the participants had managed significant teams on assignment, and teams formed from both temporary staff and permanent employees, there was a distinct preference amongst the participants not to become involved in direct management in this way. David put it this way:-

*“In my experience is that typically I tend not to be managing people, and I think there’s some exceptions to that. When I was with the police service I had a team of 15 people including senior police officers, a couple of superintendents, that sort of thing, but that was quite exceptional. In many ways I find it better ...not to be managing people because that gives a degree of, a degree of distance from the fabric of the organisational structure, enables you to retain something of the external advisor consultant ambience that, that I think means that the organisation may be more, has a greater propensity to listen to you. The second reason is that managing people can detract quite substantially from or add substantially to the work load and whereas it might be quite fine and enjoyable and interesting then unless there’s a real requirement in the role that does mean there’s less time there to devote to do some change.”*

This view reflects the generally held view of the cohort that the purpose of an assignment is to achieve a specific objective and any activity which will make meeting that objective more difficult should be avoided.

## Why do people become and remain interims?

In considering the trajectory of an interim career it is necessary to consider why individuals enter the interim markets, why they stay in that market, and whether they have been tempted to abandon that career in favour of rejoining the conventional employment market.

Mallon's (1998) research sought an understanding of whether contingent labour was pushed or pulled into and contingent career. Kunda *et al* (Kunda *et al.*, 2002) found that although a number of workers joined the contingent labour market because they had lost their permanent jobs through restructuring, the mere threat of job insecurity was insufficient to make employees volunteer to become contractors. Three factors were involved in the creation of volunteers, discontent with the tension between technical rationality and the reality of political organization and life, employee's action on, or an unanticipated event that undermines job security, and "serendipitous" contact with, or knowledge of, participants in the contract market.

Granger's *et al* (1995) typology contained four categories, summarised by Mallon (1998):

- Refugees; those who have been pushed to self employment by labour market factors and who retain an orientation towards conventional employment;
- Missionaries; those who have a positive orientation to entrepreneurial work or who have taken the opportunity to regain some autonomy in their careers. Within this group sit the free agents (Albert *et al.*, 1997; Kunda *et al.*, 2002) who voluntarily pursue independent careers.
- Trade offs; individuals who seek to balance work with other needs perhaps on the temporary basis.
- Converts; individuals who come to appreciate self employment. They may come from any of the other categories or they are most likely to start as refugees.

The participants in this study are all converts who have their roots in the refugee category. None of them voluntarily entered the interim market, and none expressed any real desire to leave it. They all did, however, identify market participants who they would characterize as refugees, people who were participating in the market on a temporary basis and with the hope that they could return to traditional employment. Within that group the participants would bracket many of high powered management temporaries previously discussed.

The evidence will be considered within a framework of entry, the event or events which caused the participants to enter the market, retention, why they remain in the market, and whether they have considered exit.

David and Peter volunteered to take severance packages judging that either what was on offer at the time was the best deal available or that the effect of continuing in their then current employment might make alternative employment at a later date more difficult to obtain.

David *"It was one of the corporate downsizing which left me the option of taking a package or else finding another role within the organisation which was not going to be in the centre, one of the eight HR people sitting in what was then the office of the Group Chief Executive [...], and, finding another job would have been substantially less attractive, it would have been far more of an operational role and then inevitably if I'd stayed, at the time I was forty-nine and a half, so a very good attractive package including a pension almost immediately payable, payable at 50; or else at some time between the ages of 50 and 60 I would have been in exactly the same position of leaving the organisation and having to find something else with substantially less opportunity of finding something else because I would then have been a, become a dyed in the wool, clearing bank HR person which I absolutely wasn't.*

Peter *"[was] working in the Chairman's office to reorganise the organisation and I was quite enjoying ever one or two years moving onto another exceedingly challenging role. And I think around about 45 [...] had gone through another upheaval and I just sat there and thought I'm going to go right through this all again just under another name and I thought Oh we are going through another change programme which is exactly what we did 5 years ago and it seemed to be a cyclical circle, I had a large Department, 120 odd people looking after finance IT and the business side. I had cut it back each year for the last three years and I woke up one morning and thought I don't want to go through this anymore, and at 45 I thought I can't even get to 50, if I get to fifty I'd have another 6 and 2/3 years and that was a major decision for me as you know from my background I'm a conservative accountant you know— so I really threw everything into the air and sort of announced that I was going and if you said to me well where's your next job I'd have said well I don't know and I'm not ...can't be any worse than this one and I was . I'd just lost interest. I didn't even think the change that I was going through warranted what the businesses was doing. I thought it was... so I left and started into what was I going to do about the mid forties, and that's when got you know and understand the concepts of the contracting market and the interim management market and moved into that market..."*

Whereas David and Peter volunteered to leave traditional employment, Michael was made redundant:

*And after that [Army service and an MBA] I went into the aerospace industry as a manager. They wanted somebody who could manage people in a technical environment, and I was managing a team of the 30 odd software engineers. The company built flight simulators for the air and aerospace market. And it was great while business was booming, but in the downturn out I went along with a third of the software engineers and half-a-dozen other managers. So I thought, well one of the*

*parts of the MBA was looking at work, Future of Work, the job market has started to turn down at that stage because we were going into recession following the first Gulf war. I started networking with people who have I been on my MBA course with. Lots of contracts followed so I thought humm. And then I got in contact again with a head hunter who led set himself up in Birmingham as one of the first people to, to, offer at the interim management through an agency. Carl Hague he had set up a company called Praxis. And he then led me into the Prudential.*

Edwards's position differed from the others:

*I found it on a like-for-like basis, where at [my old company] one of the last things I did was to write the budget for the following year, the budget was 1.7 million, the spend at [my new company] was 5.2, and that was on a like-for-like basis but they won't be like for like company. [Oldco] had 14,000 employees and 56 markets globally and did its own parts, so it was comparable in that respect. [Newco], three and a half thousand employees, 30 markets at a push, a parts distribution business, they were logistics business if you want to dress it up. Like-for-like expenditure of 5.2 million. It was not right. And the more I delved the more I uncovered staff, irrefutably evidence of people behaving corruptly-- which became more and more of an annoyance to the people I was working with, to the extent that they attempted to kick me out. Whereupon I demonstrated a slightly more resourceful side to my nature than they knew about when I rang my friendly solicitor [...] the long and short of that is that we reached an amicable settlement with [Newco]. I left an industry which I loved and I left a company which I hated and despised, which I do to this day.*

Each of these highly talented managers chose to offer themselves to the market as an interim manager. They had that option because they were aware of the existence of the alternative contract market. Whilst David saw the option as a temporary expedient which might lead to permanent work, both Michael and Peter made a conscious career choice, Michael because he found the life suited him, and, in the early days at least, there was steady flow of work,

Peter because he rejected the idea of continuing to work within a large corporate culture. Edward claims that his entry into the market was driven by financial need; on leaving his job he had a pregnant wife and a young child, and the need to get back into gainful employment as quickly as possible. He comments:

*"I guess there were a lot of interesting aspects to where we were at that time. We were out on a limb; I guess it is one way of putting it. We were not up the swanee without a paddle but we were out on a limb, certainly. And Pol was, I can't remember whether she was pregnant or not, she couldn't have been pregnant; yeah she may have been pregnant with Frank, I think she was. We'd got one child and another one on the way or soon to be on the way, mathematically soon to be on the way. She was running Dower Hill which was her company not mine, an early outsourcing company, outsourcing data capture to the Far East, before anybody thought of the word. I did the conventional thing of looking for another job and I knew how to register with agencies and all that because I'd done it 10 years previously. And I knew how the press worked was so actually looking for another job wasn't hard. Finding a job that was going to interest me was going to be difficult because I'm still in a situation where I was probably have fed the arm for the level I was operating at. And also, incidentally no different to today, not prepared to work for peanuts. So, I guess, its difficult with hindsight, it was proving difficult to find anything which I found vaguely interesting and vaguely inclined to apply for."*

His first contract, in the Banking sector, was extremely remunerative and convinced him that atypical employment was a viable alternative to a traditional work profile. When asked why he continued to work on a contract basis. Edward said:

*"For all the reasons I got into it I suppose. No one's actually yet come up with a concert something that's made me want to go and do something else, not withstanding that I would be quite happy to go and do something else if the right opportunity came up."*



David's story perhaps says as much about why interims stay in the market as any. When asked whether he had any regrets, he replied:

*"Of going the interim route? None at all. I think one other story might illustrate that I went straight from [my first role] to another [...] this was Thomas Cooke and they don't get more hard bitten profit focused than a travel and finance company and I had a specific assignment there which was to look at the reward strategy for the management population world wide. Within, I think, six weeks or thereabouts I was asked to stay on a permanent basis as head of Group HR –which I didn't think very long about because the package was such that I couldn't really say no. [...] [I talked to Lynn at] home [...] whether it's the right thing to do. She thought no it wasn't because she had seen that I was enjoying working on an assignment basis so much more than I did in former life. So she had some reservations about whether it was the right move or not. As it turned out I, well it was the right thing to do because it was very lucrative and quite fulfilling. At the same time all the things that I found, a lot of the things which I had found difficult about corporate life, about being sucked down into the, you know, the claggy stuff where there as a frustration.*

*[...]*

*"At that time, yes, yes, it [security] was. One of the attractions of taking the Thomas Cook job was that I wouldn't have to worry about whether another assignment comes along or not. As it happens in two years Thomas Cook had been sold and, so I did have to think about that again. But, the job going when Thomas Cook was sold I think in many ways was a relief. And at that time my viewpoint was good I can now go back to assignment based activity."*

This desire not to have to deal with the less positive points of corporate life was a recurring theme throughout the interviews. Nevertheless, both Edward and Peter admitted to flirting

from time to time with the permanent market. They tended to do so in those periods when the interim market was slow and they were between jobs<sup>1</sup>. Peter expressed it:

*Having said that I have flirted with the market place once or twice in the last couple of years more especially when I'm moving into month 4 [of a gap between assignments]. I've had two stints of a bad time and I've flirted with the idea and I did get partially headhunted for a finance job which sounded quite OK actually it was just down the road and what have you., it went to somebody else— that taught me something as well.*

*I got on quite well with the Managing Director. I thought the job was virtually mine, but it turned out that the Chairman was concerned about the Managing Director. His Managing Director had some really big plans .and it didn't help having somebody who was on his side when discussing the strategy for these so he was looking for an accountant that would curb and control the managing Director*

*[...] So whilst one could have done the job without any particular problem the Chairman was looking for a particular type of person which I was coming over as sort of – I could probably go so far as to say why do I need an entrepreneurial managing Director and an entrepreneurial accountant when I want an accountant to control my entrepreneurial Managing Director? So you come away afterwards and you think well, there you go. So it was probably for the good, but I will probably flirt with the market place and its probably just as well that I don't get one because if I get one I might find myself even more miserable, and I think as I get older its not on the cards.*

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<sup>1</sup>These interesting periods presented participants a number of problems of gap management which were partially addressed in the interviews and which require further research.

What we might be witnessing is, to paraphrase something that Edward has often said; the traits which make a good interim manager are the self same traits which would make it difficult for that interim to work on a permanent basis. In Edwards's words taken from a telephone call prior to interview, *"it's not difficult to see why we work as interims, we're all unemployable."*

## **What is the role of the agency in the interim market?**

Inkson et al (2001) described the relationship between agency, employer and interim manager as a 'distinctive characteristic' of the atypical employment transaction. In contrast the Sambrook research (2000) into the United Kingdom experience of interim managers reported that only 43% of interim assignments were sourced through interim agents. The balance of assignments was obtained, per Sambrook, through self marketing (46.6%) or through management consultants (9.9%).

All of the participants were registered within interim Management agencies, although Michael avoided agency work whenever possible, preferring to network to obtain work. It might be significant that of the participants he was the one with the longest continuous gap in his assignment history, 15 months. Despite this commitment to agencies, or at least the willingness to work through them, agents were not on the whole held in high regard. Rather they were perceived as a necessary evil. Peter's comments are typical. Having discussed general contract agencies he went on to say:

*"the others [assignments] seem to be with the big interim management sort of outfits who deal with interim management and who a wider view point of the flexibility and capabilities of people. They're where I get more of the work; they are now coming into two stages as well. I mean they use to all be pretty good but now I think that some of them are getting into sort of you're a profit margin to them and turn, turnaround, but some of the others I will meet with them in between when I'm looking*

*at work so I will contact them and tell them I'm in the market place and meet with the odd one or two."*

Nevertheless, David sees agents in a more positive light. When asked what was the role of agents he said:

*"I suppose a broking role. What they give the individual is to make assignments with a degree of thought as to whether your suitability, whether you are suitable for them. What they provide to the client is first to the converse of that and secondly, because I believe that the majority of interims, true Interims, would be registered with the majority of if not all of the half-a-dozen, or maybe it's now a dozen, agencies, be able to tap into that available market and through it provide somebody that they know firstly that they enjoy interim and secondly that they have a good pedigree"*

The interviews showed extensive use of the internet and job boards in seeking assignments, However, Michael apart, the most common way of finding assignments was through the use of agents.

Clearly agents play an important part in the interim market. The present small sample indicates a dominant influence within the market sector inhabited by the participants. Sambrook (2000) suggests a less dominant influence of agents in the UK market and consequently the anomaly requires further research.

## Conclusion

The problem of generalization has already been discussed in this paper. Accordingly, the conclusions from the paper can, at this stage, only be considered as conclusions drawn from the current research. However, adopting the principles of grounded theory, it is legitimate to develop hypothesis from the research reported in this paper. Therefore, the conclusions set out below can be considered to be hypothesis.

The picture that emerges from this study is of a group of individuals who, although they may not have wanted to join the interim market, have consciously decided that they wish to continue to work in that market in preference to alternative forms of employment. That group distinguishes itself from other typical management workers, and in particular “high level management temps” and other professional temporary staff. However, there is no clear evidence that the group itself can be subdivided between interim executives and interim management. On the contrary, the majority of the participants do not recognize that segmentation.

Interim managers also distinguished themselves from consultants who they see, primarily, as functioning in an environment where their interest is conflicted between their obligating to their employer and their obligations to the client. Moreover, interim managers distinguish themselves from consultants through their commitment to the whole life cycle of a project.

Although interim managers may have specific technical skills, their primary skill is in general management. Notwithstanding the identification of that primary skill, interim managers seek to avoid the direct management of people.

The present study is inconclusive as to the role of agencies. However, it does indicate that the majority of assignments of the participants were obtained via interim management agencies.

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**Document 4**

**Report**

# **The Interim Management Market**

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# 1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to offer a contribution to the understanding of the interim management market. The paper specifically investigates four issues, what are interim managers used for, what characteristics clients' value in interim managers, how do interim managers compare with management consultants and can interim managers and management consultants be considered to be professional.

It is indisputable that there has been a major expansion of the interim management market (Smethurst 2004; 2005). The tendency to employ managers on short term contracts is one of the fastest growing trends in human resources (Feltham and Hughes 1999; Smethurst 2005), this despite evidence that suggests the demise of the internal market has been reversed and that the increase in the use of flexible labour has plateaued (White, Hill et al. 2004). But outside of what Bennis and O'Toole (2005) describe as the professional literature little attention has been paid to the interim management market in the literature (Tyrrell 2004).

The annual guide to interim management published by People Manager typifies much of the professional literature on interim management. Echoing the positive side of interim management conveyed in the books specifically written about the market (Russell 1998; Clutterbuck and Dearlove 1999; McGovern and Russell 2001), the professional literature tends to emphasis positive aspects of interim management as seen from the supply side (Brass 2004; Rima 2004; Fuller 2005; Persaud 2005), or are about the technical issues of recruitment (Allen 2004; Arkin 2004).

There is of course a rich literature on atypical employment in general. The atypical employment market is a significant part of the employment environment. Thirteen

percent of the United Kingdom labour force have been identified as self-employed (Burchell, Deakin et al. 1999; Leighton 2002). And, illustrating the complexity of UK employment law, up to 30% of the workforce may, at best, be ambiguously categorized (Burchell, Deakin et al. 1999; Leighton 2002).

Of the many workers who work outside the terms of standard employment only a few will be interim managers. In fact, managers, whether project or role based, form a relatively small percentage of all the employees on fixed-term contracts. Purcell and Purcell (1998) found that in 1996 48.7% of fixed-term workers worked in healthcare and teaching. Only 2.6% of fixed term workers were classified as managers and administrators. The difficulties of understanding the extent of flexibility in the labour market are, compounded by the market trend towards frequent job changes, more varied work patterns and the increase in portfolio working (Leighton 2002). An individual may change his or her employment status many times over a working life.

Any study of interim managers and executives must isolate the interims from the noise of other atypical workers and the professionals substituted into an organisations hierarchy on a fixed term contract discussed by Uzzi and Barsness (1998).

Where the literature has considered interim managers and contract professionals it has tended to concentrate on the psychological contracts of those engaged in this type of work. Those writers who suggest that those engaged in this type of work would prefer permanent roles (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2000; Inkson, Heising et al. 2001; Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2002), are in tension with those who identify workers with a positive attitude to contract work (Albert and Bradley 1997; Mallon 1998; Benner

2002; Kunda, Barley et al. 2002). That positive view of interim work was a feature of the interviews of interim managers carried out by Tyrrell (2004).

The literature does not address the demand side of interim management. Why do companies employ interims? If interim management is no more than the provision of temporary management then the answer might appear to be obvious, but interims are also employed outside of functional roles. Why would an employer engage an interim rather than employ a management consultant?

Section 2 describes the background to the research. In doing so it discusses the size of the interim market, and drawing on interviews of interim managers by Tyrrell (2004) something of the nature of the market. The section concludes by identifying a number of potential distinctions by which interims may distance themselves from other atypical workers.

Although both interim managers and management consultants may belong to any one of a number of professions, being an interim manager or a management consultant is not of itself a profession (ibid). Section 3 develops an argument that professions do not have a monopoly on professionalism, and that professionalism may be a potential differentiator between interim managers and management consultants.

Section 4 discusses the method adopted in the research reported in this paper.

Section 5 outlines the findings from a survey of manager's attitudes to interim managers and management consultants. The focus of the survey was to gain insights into how those managers saw the role and function of interim managers and in doing so to answer the research questions previously outlined.

The following section, section 6, draws together the elements of the analysis.

## 2 Background to the Research

Estimates of the size of the interim management market vary enormously. The Sambrook report suggests that some two thousand interim managers are working at any one time, and that the total size of the market is around four thousand five hundred interims (Sambrook 2000) operating in a market which has grown from £75 million in 1995 to £190 million by 2000 with an anticipated outrun from this current year of £420 million. Russam (2005) estimates that about 20,000

**Table 1 UK Interim Market Top 15 Providers. Source (Executive Grapevine 2005)**

Data for Rates over £500	1	1	BIE Executive online	10.5%	800
	=3	2	Albermarle Interim Management <sup>2</sup>	8.5%	Not disclosed
	7	3	Impact Executives	6.9%	2000
	=3	4	Odgers Interim	6.5%	Not disclosed
	12	5	Veredus Executive Resourcing Interim Management	5.9%	9000
	6	6	Partners Group	5.6%	4500

<sup>1</sup> The following companies formally requested not to be included in the survey: Boyden Interim Executive and Praxis Executives on Assignment.

<sup>2</sup> Includes Albermarle Interim management plc, Albermarle Financial Services, and Albermarle Health Services Professionals

14	7	KPMG Interim Management	5.2%	Not disclosed
13	8	Penna Interim	4.7%	7000
5	9	Ashton Penny	3.8%	8000
11	10	Heidrick & Struggles Interim Executive	3.5%	Not disclosed
	11	Executives online	3.2%	4500
	12	Armadillo Executive Resourcing	2.9%	Not disclosed
	13	Hoggart Bowers Interim Management	2.7%	2500
	14	Archer Mathieson	2.5%	2500
	15	Barnes Karvelle Interim Executives	2.4%	3000

senior executives operate as interim managers and independent consultants, about half of whom operate through agency arrangements, the other half providing their services directed to client companies. Other estimates put the numbers of interims at a much lower figure: The CBI Business Guide to Interim executives (BEI/CBI) suggests ‘a few hundred’ and Cain estimates ‘fewer than a thousand’ (Cain 2002).

Table 1 sets out the top fifteen UK agencies in the interim market, and their market share. The data excludes interim managers whose daily rate is under £500. Where available, the number of interim managers on each agency’s books has been included. The total of interims shown in Table 1 as being available to the top fifteen agencies should be treated with a degree of caution, particularly as a guide to the size of the interim market: many interims will be registered with a number of agencies.

Nevertheless, the data suggests that a considerable number of individuals are registered for work with the leading agencies. Moreover, Sambrook (2000) has

identified that 43% of interims bypass agencies in seeking work. Russam (2005) and Russell (1998) puts the figure of interims obtaining work direct at 50%.

The major management consultancy practices both contract in, their clients outsource the provision of business services to the consultancy firm, and provide traditional consultancy services to clients. Drawing a distinction between consultancy and interim management is difficult because of a perception shared by interims and clients, that the terms are interchangeable (ExecutiveOnline 2004). Indeed, interim managers, perhaps reflecting a degree of inter-changeability of roles, describe themselves as “independent consultants” (see e.g. Russell 1998). Interim managers do, on occasions, undertake consultancy roles, sometimes by forming teams for an assignment<sup>3</sup>, and consultancy firms, in addition to frequently having their own interim management divisions, undertake, particularly when there is a scarcity of consultancy work, “body shopping” by entering the interim market to utilize spare consultancy resource<sup>4</sup>.

A survey of 127 interim managers carried out in January 2004 (ExecutiveOnline 2004) stated that only 29% of respondents saw themselves as purely interim managers and 6% as purely consultants. 44% thought of themselves as either interims or

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<sup>3</sup> The author took part in one such venture, put together by another interim, in early 2003 to re-engineer business processes for a company in the NW of England.

<sup>4</sup> Resource managers are under pressure to maximise utilisation. In 2002 and 2003 the author encountered consultancy employees undertaking interim assignments and was informed that a big five consultancies “bench” was available for this type of work.

consultants depending on the type of work they were undertaking and 21% switched classification to satisfy client demand. Implicit in these results is the idea that for many it is the work undertaken that determines role classification.

Do interims carry out different work to consultants and/or is their approach to the work different? Clearly, and despite the difficulties identified, the two roles are distinguishable. When asked (ExecutiveOnline 2004) 77% of interim managers reported spending more than 50% of their time on interim manager work, whereas only 23% reported spending 50% of their time on consultancy. Moreover only 43% of clients agreed that interim managers were an alternative to management consultants, while 52% disagreed.

ExecutiveOnline's (2004) published data appears to indicate that whereas there is a diffusion of views as to why 52% of clients do not see that interim managers were an alternative to management consultants, no single factor is given by more than 2% of the respondents. The views of the 43% who did agree were very much more polarised, with 39% identifying interim managers as being more cost effective than management consultants. Drawing on earlier research, ExecutiveOnline identified the key criticisms of management consultants and how interim management address them.



**Table 2 Interim management and management consultancy (Adapted from ExecutiveOnline, 2004)**

<b>Main criticism of management consultants</b>	<b>Mentioned by</b>	<b>Interim management response</b>
<b>Expensive</b>	76%	The average daily rate for an interim in the year to September 2003 was £571 (Source ExecutiveOnline 2004)
<b>Too eager to sell other services</b>	59%	Interims are independent practitioners with no add-ons to sell
<b>Too prescriptive</b>	49%	
<b>Consultant is loyal, first and foremost, to the consultancy</b>	37%	Interims do not have an employment relationship with a third party.

For the purposes of this study a key boundary is that between interim managers and contract professionals. Contract professionals are in turn distinguishable from Atkinson's (1984) peripheral workers by their skill set. Benner's (Benner 2002) study of skilled atypical workers suggested two modes of flexibility: flexibility in skills and flexibility in employment. What distinguishes this typology from the traditional views of flexibility, internal, numerical, and financial, is that it is either explicitly market based, the employee offering services within time bound contracts, or it is implicitly market based, both employer and employee understands that the employment

relationship will be short term. Benner describes circumstances in Silicon Valley where a CV that did not show frequent job changes would disadvantage the candidate, both because he or she would be thought to have limited attractiveness to other employers and because of the effect that such limited exposure would have on their experience. This was put to the author by an interim manager in terms that when considering the experience of a permanent employee it was necessary to decide whether he or she had, say twenty years' experience or one years' experience twenty times.

Tyrrell (2004) proposed that a distinction could be made between the various categories of atypical workers by considering the nature of each type of engagement. The conjecture is illustrated in Table 3 which shows a typology of atypical workers, those who do not work within what many consider to be a traditional employment arrangement, derived from four dimensions. The first dimension is that of market power, can the employee easily relocate to another engagement? Secondly can the employee define what tasks he or she undertakes within their employment? Thirdly, can the employer direct the employee’s work within a task, and finally can the employer order the performance of tasks. Within this typology interim executives and managers are hypothesised to enjoy relative freedom within their work environment. That hypothesis was confirmed by the interviews of interim managers carried out by Tyrrell (2004).

**Table 3 Working typology of contingent labour (Source Tyrrell 2004)**

<b>Interim Executive</b>	Experienced executive working at or near Board level with either	High	High	High	High
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	executive responsibility for a substantial element of the organisation or project responsibility				
<b>Interim Manager</b>	Formerly a senior/middle manager now typically employed in a temporary line function	Low-Medium	Medium	High	Low
<b>Contract Professional</b>	Skilled professional form either the traditional (e.g. lawyer accountant) or new professionals (e.g. IT)	Generic skills – power will depend on market conditions	Low	High	Medium
<b>Skilled-worker</b>	Generic craft skills	Generic skills – power will depend on market conditions	Low	Low	Low
<b>Semi-skilled worker</b>	Idiosyncratic skills specific to a particular employer or sector	Power limited to the difference in cost between the output of this class of workers and the deduced output of their replacements	Low	Low	Low
<b>Unskilled</b>	Generic labour	Low	Low	Low	Low

These definitional difficulties were given substance in interviews of interim managers (Tyrrell 2004). Those interviewed expressed a desire to draw a distinction between themselves and other categories of atypical workers. They had a strong self-image of themselves as interim managers and contrasted that image with, management on temporary placement and other professional temporary staff, and from management consultants.

The definition of interim management provided by Simms (2003):

*‘Interim managers are experienced, confident operators who can step in at extremely short notice to cover gaps in company hierarchies or to manage specific ventures or restructuring. They work at or near board level and are given the authority to make changes’* (Simms 2003)

is consistent with the origins of interim management outlined in Golzen (1992), and with the interviews undertaken in the course of preparation of this paper with interim management agencies, who distinguish between role assignments, the insertion into a undertaking's hierarchy, and project assignments, the management of specific outcomes, but found little favour with those interim managers interviewed by Tyrrell (2004). For the interviewees there was a real distinction between themselves as "interim managers" and the provision of "temporary hires" to cover gaps in an organisation's hierarchy, describing those who undertake that work as "high grade management temps" (Tyrrell 2004)

The interim managers interviewed by Tyrrell were also concerned to distinguish themselves from management consultants. They saw management consultants, as functioning in an environment conflicted by their obligations to their employer and their obligations to the assignment client. Additionally, they considered that they could be distinguished from management consultants through their commitment, as interims, to the whole life cycle of the project

The CBI Business Guide to Interim Managers used the term "Interim Executive" to describe interim services, and that term was carried forward into the typology set out in Table 3. The term is increasingly heard but is it mere marketing hype? The interims interviewed by Tyrrell (2004), did not recognise a distinction, but might others?

Understanding the distinctive role of an interim manager, if such a role exists, is important to business to ensure that appropriate resource is applied to situations as they arise. It is also important to interim providers, who have described to the author

an increasing shift from role based to project based assignments. Finally, a distinctive role gives identity to those who practice as interim managers and in doing so gives insight into the psychological contract of those who pursue that living.

In this section the importance of interim market has been established by bringing together the available evidence for the size of the market. The market has been established to be substantial. The section has also identified that at least some interim managers differentiate between contract professionals, “management temps” and management consultants; although in the latter case the distinction might only be rooted in the current role being performed. In the following section professionalism is considered as a potential differentiator between interim managers and management consultants.

### **3 Professionals, Professionalism and Professionalization.**

Those interim managers interviewed by Tyrrell (2004) did not see themselves as being part of a profession of interim managers. They ran businesses and the businesses offered services (ibid). But the interviews indicated a professional, client-centric, approach to their work. Consequently it is worth considering whether the work of interim management has been professionalised.

The idea of profession, and of professional, is not universal. The Anglo-American model of profession tends to emphasize market closure, the process by which those who are not qualified are excluded from practice in certain areas, occupying what Friedson (1982) described as market shelters, whereas the continental European view

has tended either a definition that encompasses “...*occupational identity, career trajectories, professional training and expertise, and employment in public sector organizations* ” (Evetts 2003), or most broadly, the term, particularly in France, but increasingly in common usage in the UK, is seen as analogous to occupation.

Understanding what a profession is has been made more difficult by the aspirations of many occupational groups to become fully fledged professionals (Hall 1968) and the bureaucratization of both the traditional and new professions within organizational hierarchies (ibid). If “profession” is something different to “occupation” we need to look for the distinguishing characteristics of a professional.

Halliday (1987) proposed that a profession must be founded on a cognitive base. He describes descriptive professions based on empiricism and prescriptive professions that are concerned with normative values, of which the most obvious examples are holy orders and the law.

If a cognitive base were all that there was to being a professional it would be difficult to distinguish between a professional and any group of knowledge workers, each has an epistemological base for their occupation. That outcome would be consistent with Becker’s (1970) view that professions are just occupations that have been lucky enough to hold onto “that honorific title”. Nevertheless he argued that professions represented folk symbols that organise the way people think about work, their approach to their work is conditioned by membership of their professions. That view goes beyond mere technical skill as it introduces the possibility of values, particularly values which are consonant with Rosemary O’Day’s original definition of a profession, “Doing God’s work”, with the implication of a moral obligation to put the

client's interest first, being a material factor in how the work is executed (Tyrrell In preparation).

Ritzer (1971) suggested that what mattered is the degree of professionalism an individual showed. This idea allows the possibility that the ontology of profession, which must include both a technical and a values epistemology may differ from the ontology of professionalism, which may consist only of values.

It follows that despite the rejection by interim managers of the idea of a profession of interim managers (Tyrrell 2004) there is value in inquiring into the professionalism of interim managers.

The foundations of much of the modern literature of professionalization, the process by which an occupation becomes a profession is Hall's (1968) article *Professionalization and Bureaucratization*. Hall proposed six dimensions of professionalization:-

1. The extent to which the locus of decision making is pre-structured by the organisation. A rigid hierarchy of authority that controlled operational decision making would appear to be incompatible with professional status. In contrast, and within the typology described by Tyrrell (2004), power to define tasks and discretion over what tasks are to be performed is indicative of professionalism.
2. The extent to which work tasks are subdivided by functional specialization decided by the organisation. A high degree of

specialisation suggests control within task and is indicative of professional work. This dimension equates with power within tasks.

3. The extent to which the behaviour of organizational members is subject to organizational control. A high degree of organisational control would be negatively associated with professionalism.
4. The extent to which organizational members must follow organizationally defined techniques in dealing with situations which they encounter. This is another example of organisational control.
5. The extent to which organizational members and outsiders are treated without regard to individual qualities.
6. The extent to which organizationally defined “universalistic” standards are utilized in personal selection and advancement. Hall suggests that an emphasis on technical skills in recruitment is indicative of professional status.

The nature of the engagements of interim managers and management consultants means that not all these dimension are relevant qua assignment clients. Nevertheless it is argued that it is possible to make a case for professionalism, following Ritzer’s (1971) idea of an occupation continuum, if sufficient examples of the dimensions are found and there is evidence of “professional” values being applied within the assignment.



## 4 Method

The themes outlined above suggest the need for further investigation. The interim management market has three dimensions, the interims themselves, interim agencies and the organisations that use interims. The literature, both professional and academic, has tended to ignore the client's motivation in employing interim managers. The current research addresses that question from the perspective of organisations.

This study is based on an electronic survey of managers. A commercial list of 600 managers in organisations with 250 or more employees was acquired. Cost constraints meant that the list was purchased for single use. The selection criteria were chief executives, operations managers and human resource managers. Each individual on the list was invited by email, a copy of the email is contained in Appendix 1, to participate in a web survey by going to a web site, the instrument is contained in Appendix 2, the URL of which was imbedded in the email.

The suppliers of the data base advise that at any time around 20 to 25% % of email addresses will be out of date. Shenhan and Shenhan (1999) confirm this percentage at 25% from their empirical research. Of the total number of emails sent out 144 were returned as mail failures, indicating a non-functional address.

Spam, unsolicited emails, has become an increasing problem for many users, many of whom take steps to avoid or mitigate the delivery of such emails to their system.

Arguably, the emails promoting the survey might be considered spam. The spanhuas.org. define spam as an issue about consent not content (Spanhouse.org 2005). That definition sits at one end of a continuum of opinion. Sheehan and

Sheehan (1999) analyse the potential for the use of the internet for academic survey purposes and conclude that spam is unsolicited email of a commercial or political nature or that might cause distress to a user. Nevertheless, whatever the niceties of the definition, it is likely that a number of emails will have been caught and diverted by organisations' spam filters.

Of those emails which survived the mailing process, 46 replies were received. Two of those replies were that corporate policy prohibited response to surveys. A further 16 replies said they have no experience of the use of interim managers and on those grounds declined to undertake the survey. The remainder, 28, completed the survey questionnaire and are reported below.

Given the variables in delivery it is difficult to calculate a response rate to the survey. The evidence of response rates on email surveys is varied, but the summary of surveys set out in Schonlau Fricker et al (2002) suggests that response rates for convenience surveys conducted by email are likely to be low.

There are a number of lessons which can be drawn from this survey exercise.

Schonlau Fricker (2002) review a number of studies and conclude that mail achieves a higher response rate than email. They report that email surveys benefit from advanced notification and follow ups, and that these additional steps, in line with conventional surveys are likely to yield an increased response rate of almost twenty-five percent.

There is evidence that a web facilitated survey might be more useful as a means of increasing the response rate to normal surveys than as a standalone survey method in its own right (Schonlau, Fricker et al. 2002).

Two elements, confidence and risk lie at the heart of the tests for statistical significance (Bryman 2004), but such tests can only be applied to data that has been drawn from probability samples. Nevertheless convenience samples are more prominent than samples based on probability (ibid). The use of a convenience sample presents a challenge to generalisation, but Bryman reminds us that a probability sample can only be generalised to the population from which the sample was taken.

The sampling method chosen for this survey was selected to maximise variability in the survey, by seeking views from a wide range of organisations. Whilst it is true that the response rate was disappointing low, those who did respond represent a range of unconnected organisations. The alternative strategy considered, using a snowball, may have resulted in a sample frame consisting of similar organisations.

The survey instrument contained a number of Likert scale questions. Strictly these produce ordinal data but many writers suggest that they can be used as if they produced interval/ratio variables (Bryman 2004) and, where appropriate, that procedure has been followed in this paper.

## **5 Analysis of the Data**

### ***5.1 Is there a difference between Interim Managers and interim executives?***

The first part of the survey was intended to establish whether there was a difference between interim managers and interim executives, and if a difference was identified to

find an explanation for that difference. The majority of the 26 respondents who answered this question thought that a difference did exist.

Using a five point Likert scale, strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree, four questions were put to respondents:

- A1 Interim managers can be distinguished from interim executives as executives work at or near board level.
- A2 Interim executives can be distinguished from interim managers because interim executives act as consultants to the board.
- A3 Interim executives can be distinguished from interim managers because executives act as consultants to senior management.
- A4 There is no difference between interim managers and executives.

### **There is no difference between interim managers and interim executives**

Proposition A4 was first tested to establish whether respondents perceived a difference between interim managers and executives.

The respondents were grouped into sets, HR managers and other managers. As a preliminary step in the analysis the response of each group to the questions was checked for equal variance using an F Test and Leven's Test. The data did not provide enough evidence to claim that the two populations have unequal variances. Thus, it is reasonable to assume equal variances when using a two-sample t-procedure

Although the samples are small, a two-sample T test was undertaken to see whether there was statistical significance in the difference between the two respondent groups, HR managers and other managers in relation to proposition A4, that there is no difference between interim managers and interim executives. To test for significance the hypothesis was set up that there was no difference between the responses from those managers who reported that they were human resource professionals and the responses of those classified as other managers. At the 95% confidence interval, calculated at (-0.860540, 0.610540), there is a strong suggestion that there is no difference between the population means. Turning to the hypothesis result, the test statistic is -0.36 and the P-value 0.723 with 16 degrees of freedom. Since the p value is greater than the level of significance, 0.5, there is no evidence for a difference between the responses. Therefore there is insufficient evidence to reject the hypothesis.

As the data is significantly skewed (Figure 1) the median is likely to be a more reliable indicator of location. The median for all responses is 4 (Figure 2), but that masks a difference between the respondent groups (Figure 3).

That difference can be emphasised by consolidating the data into a categorical table, treating neutrals as “not agrees” (Table 4).

**Table 4 Chi-Square analysis Interim Managers work at Board level**

	Human Resources	Other	All
<b>Agree</b>	6	10	16
	6.15	9.85	16.00
	0.003846	0.002404	*
<b>Not Agree</b>	4	6	10
	3.85	6.77	10.00
	0.006154	0.003846	*
<b>All</b>	10	16	26
	10.00	16.00	26.00

	*	*	*
<b>Cell Contents:</b>	Count		
	Expected count		
	Contribution to Chi-square		
<b>Pearson Chi-Square = 0.016, DF = 1, P-Value = 0.899</b>			
<b>Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square = 0.016, DF = 1, P-Value = 0.899</b>			

Table 5 analyses the respondent groups by the size of their organisation. The breakpoint between small/medium companies was set at 1000 employees, though the data clustered at 250 employees or less and 2000 employees and more. The data suggests that, of the respondents who declared the size of their organisation, 90% of human resource respondents were employed by large organisations, whereas 87% of general managers came from small medium organisations. This difference between samples should be kept in mind generally when considering the responses to the survey

**Table 5 Respondents by size of organisation**

<b>Large</b>	9	2	11
<b>Small/Medium</b>	1	13	14
<b>Missing</b>	0	3	
<b>All</b>	10	15	25

Using Chi-square, the independence of the samples was tested. The null hypothesis is that the size of organisation will influence the views of the respondents. The probability that  $X^2$  is below 0.016 is 0.899, so the probability that it is more than 0.016 is 0.111, or 1.1%. Since this is less than 5% we can reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance and can rule out the possibility of any association

between organisational size and response. Consequently we can consider the data set as a whole in response to proposition A4.

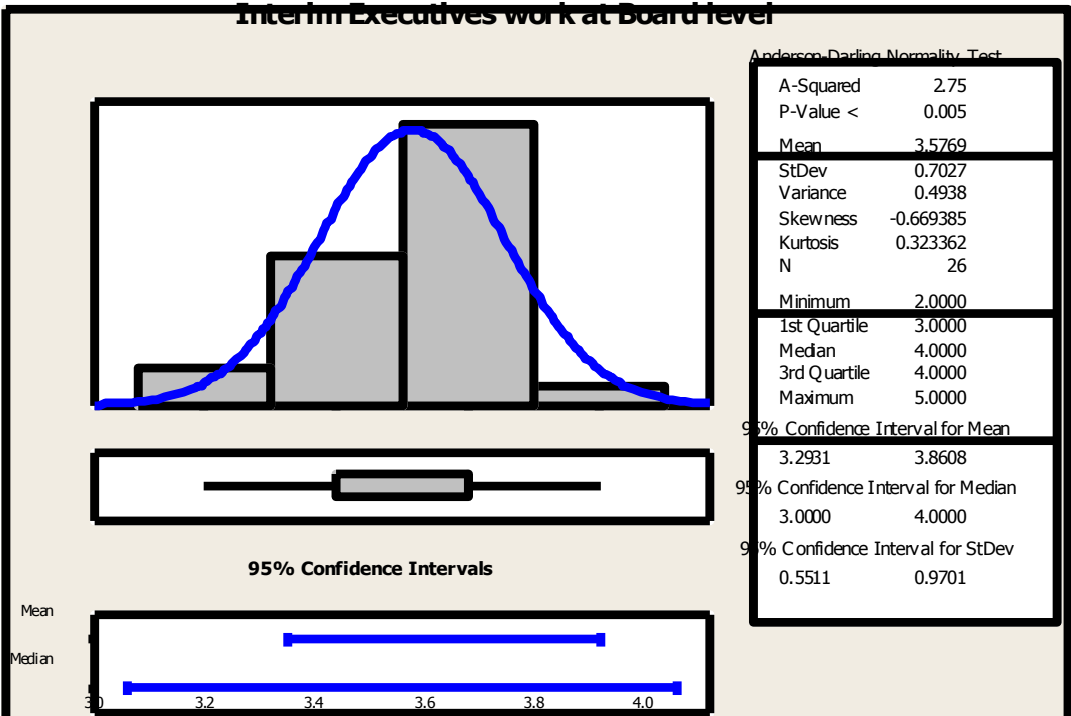
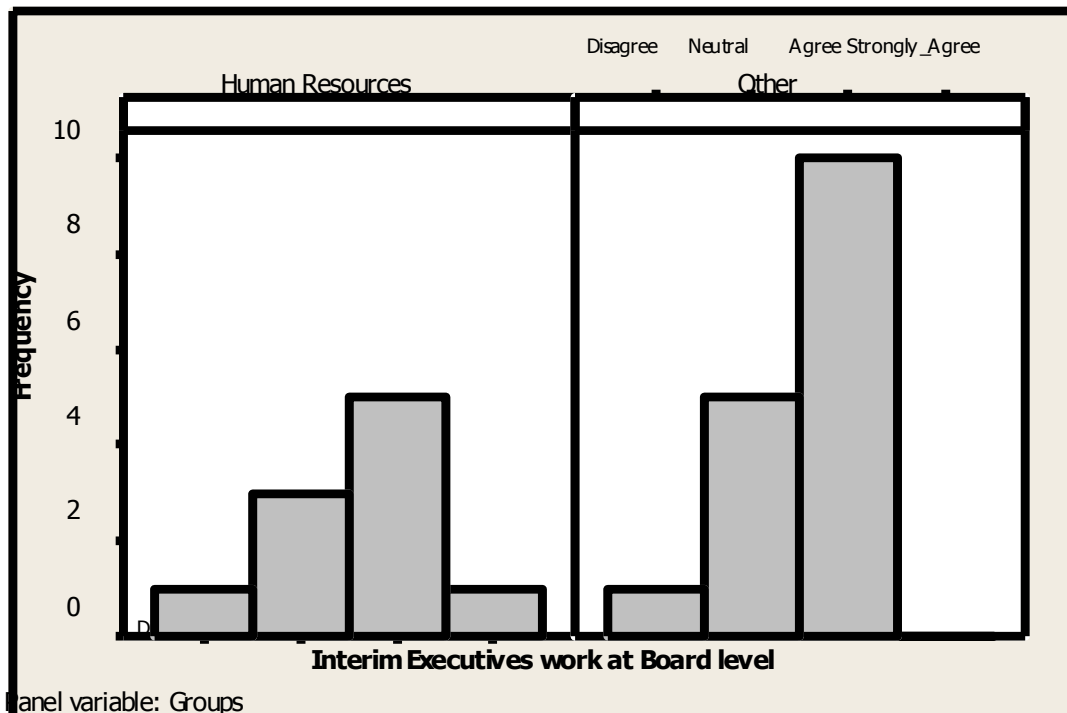


Figure 1



**Figure 2**

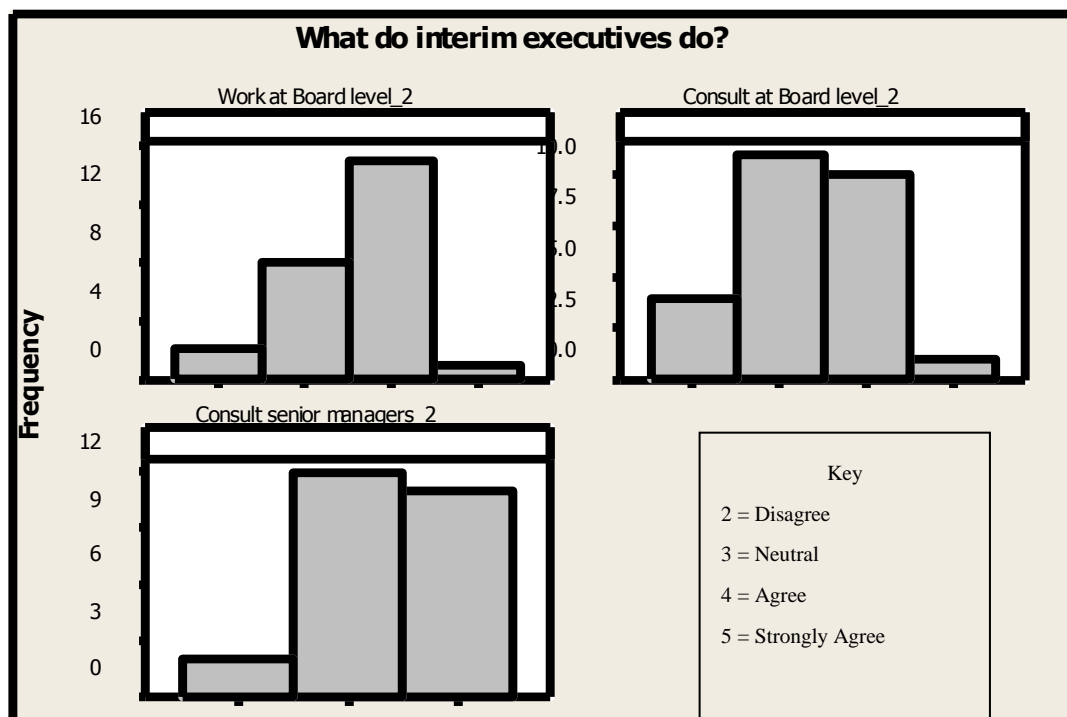
We can conclude that respondents accept proposition A4, that there is no difference between interim managers and interim executives. Given that they report no difference between interim managers and executives, it can be expected that propositions A1, interim managers can be distinguished from interim executives because the latter work at or near board level, A2, interim managers can be distinguished from interim executives because the latter act as consultants to the board, and A3, interim managers can be distinguished from interim executives because the latter act as consultants to the senior management, will each be rejected. However, the outcome was very different.



## A1, A2, A3 What do interim managers do?

In this section we continue to consider whether there is a distinction between interim managers and executives by considering propositions A1, A2 and A3, which seek to identify a difference through the function performed by interim executives.

Figure 3



The evidence suggests that, notwithstanding the rejection of proposition A4, respondents do identify a difference between interim managers and executives (Figure 3). Tables 6, 7 and 8 analyse the responses to proposition A1, A2 and A3 using chi-square analysis. The results should be treated with some caution as in each case there is a cell with a count of less than 5 and as each of the tables is grid of 4 cells, 25% of the cells are affected. It follows that assumptions about independence cannot be made

from this data. Nevertheless, the analysis is helpful in building a picture of where further investigation is required.

Table 6 Chi-Square analysis of Proposition A1

Interim Executives work at or near Board level			
	Human Resources	Other	All
<b>Agree</b>	6	10	16
	6.15	9.85	16.00
	0.003846	0.002404	*
<b>Not Agree</b>	4	6	10
	3.85	6.15	10.00
	0.006154	0.003846	*
<b>All</b>	10	16	26
	10.00	16.00	26.00
	*	*	*
<b>Cell Contents:</b>	Count		
	Expected count		
	Contribution to Chi-square		
<b>Pearson Chi-Square = 0.016, DF = 1, P-Value = 0.899</b>			
<b>Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square = 0.016, DF = 1, P-Value = 0.899</b>			
<b>* NOTE * 1 cells with expected counts less than 5</b>			

The data represented in Table 6 was further analysed using Fisher's exact test which suggests a probability of correlation between the samples of 0.683403. As the sample is small a Leven's test was used to test for equal variance. The samples were found to have equivalence at the 95% confidence level (-0.622392, 0.697392). The p-value was 0.905 which indicates that there is no evidence for a difference in the respondents' views between groups. We can conclude, therefore, that size of organisation does not affect the response to proposition A1 and that the combined sample may be used in assessing response to the proposition.

Does the distinction between interim managers and executives arise because interim executives act as consultants to the Board? That question is tested in proposition A2. Table 7 consists of the Chi-Square analysis which, as previously discussed should be treated with caution as one square has counts of less than 5. Again a Fisher's p-value of 0.683403 was calculated and consequently a *t*-test was completed. The samples were found to have equivalence at the 95% confidence level (-0.753894, 0.72889). The p-value was 0.723 which indicates that there is no evidence for a difference in the respondents' views between groups.

**Table 7 Chi-Square analysis of Proposition A2**

<b>Interim Executives act as consultants to the Board</b>			
	Human Resources	Other	All
<b>Agree</b>	3	7	10
	3.85	6.15	10.00
	0.1862	0.1163	*
<b>Not Agree</b>	7	9	16
	6.15	9.85	16.00
	0.1163	0.0727	*
<b>All</b>	10	16	26
	0.00	16.00	26.00
	*	*	*
<b>Cell Contents:</b>	Count		
	Expected count		
	Contribution to Chi-square		
<b>Pearson Chi-Square = 0.492, DF = 1, P-Value = 0.483</b>			
<b>Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square = 0.499, DF = 1, P-Value = 0.480</b>			
<b>* NOTE * 1 cells with expected counts less than 5</b>			

Given these results we can conclude that size of organisation does not affect the response to proposition A2 and that the combined sample may be used in assessing response to the proposition

The final proposition, A3, tests whether the distinguishing feature of an interim executive is that executives provide consultancy to senior managers. Table 8 contains the chi-square analysis of responses, which, one cell containing less than 5 counts must be treated, as before, we caution.

**Table 8 Chi-square analysis of proposition A3**

<b>Interim Executives act as consultants to senior management</b>			
	Human Resources	Other	All
<b>Agree</b>	4	7	11
	4.23	6.77	11.00
	0.012587	0.007867	*
<b>Not Agree</b>	6	9	15
	5.77	9.23	15.00
	0.009231	0.005769	*
<b>All</b>	10	16	26
	10.00	16.00	26.00
	*	*	*
<b>Cell Contents:</b>	Count		
	Expected count		
	Contribution to Chi-square		
<b>Pearson Chi-Square = 0.035, DF = 1, P-Value = 0.851</b>			
<b>Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square = 0.036, DF = 1, P-Value = 0.850</b>			
<b>* NOTE * 1 cells with expected counts less than 5</b>			

The Fisher exact test gives a probability of equal variance between samples of 1. Using a two sample *t*-test the samples were found to have equivalence at the 95% confidence level (-0.646458, 0.56312). The p-value was 0.885 which indicates that there is no evidence for a difference in the respondents' views between groups. We can conclude, therefore, that size of organisation does not affect the response to proposition A3 and that the combined sample may be used in assessing response to the proposition

These results are discussed further in section 6

### ***Why employ an interim manager?***

Interim managers are engaged on role based assignments, in which they fulfil a role within a company's hierarchy and task, or project, based assignments in which they undertake a task within an organisation that is not considered to be in the normal course of business. Anecdotal evidence derived from discussions with both interims and interim agencies suggest that the market is moving towards a greater proportion of project based assignments. The survey tested this evidence by seeking an understanding of how the respondents saw the role of interim managers. The survey presented two questions that took opposing positions:-

- B1 An interim manager is normally engaged to fill a temporary gap in an organisational hierarchy
- B2 An interim manager is normally engaged to project manage change within a limited period of time

The propositions were addressed by 28 respondents. All human resource respondents and the majority of other respondents, 94% in the case of B1 and 89% in the case of B2, either agreed or strongly agreed with these propositions. Where there was no agreement respondents took a neutral position.

Respondents were not explicitly asked to rank the two propositions, but respondents were asked, Table 9, to say what they thought interim managers do. When asked what they would use interims for respondents ranked covering a gap in an organisation hierarchy” fourth in the activities selected. Table 9 lists the results. It is notably that three of the first four activities can be said to fall within project based work that utilises skills which may not be readily available to a line manager.

**Table 9 What are interim managers used for?**

	Question	HRD	Other	All	Russam
1	For a special project	10	14	24	3
2	Manage a change management programme	10	12	22	
3	To gain access to specialist skills	10	11	21	1
4	To cover a temporary absence /during recruitment	9	11	20	7/10
5	To Develop/implement a new strategy	6	11	17	2
6	To deploy a major new technology	8	7	15	
7	The acquisition of a new business	7	7	14	
7	Restructure a business	8	6	14	4
9	The expansion of an existing business	6	7	13	
10	Outsourcing	6	6	12	
11	Management Mentoring/Coaching	5	5	10	5
12	Expansion into a new geographical market	5	4	9	
12	Merge with another company	2	7	9	8
14	Launch a new product or service	4	4	8	

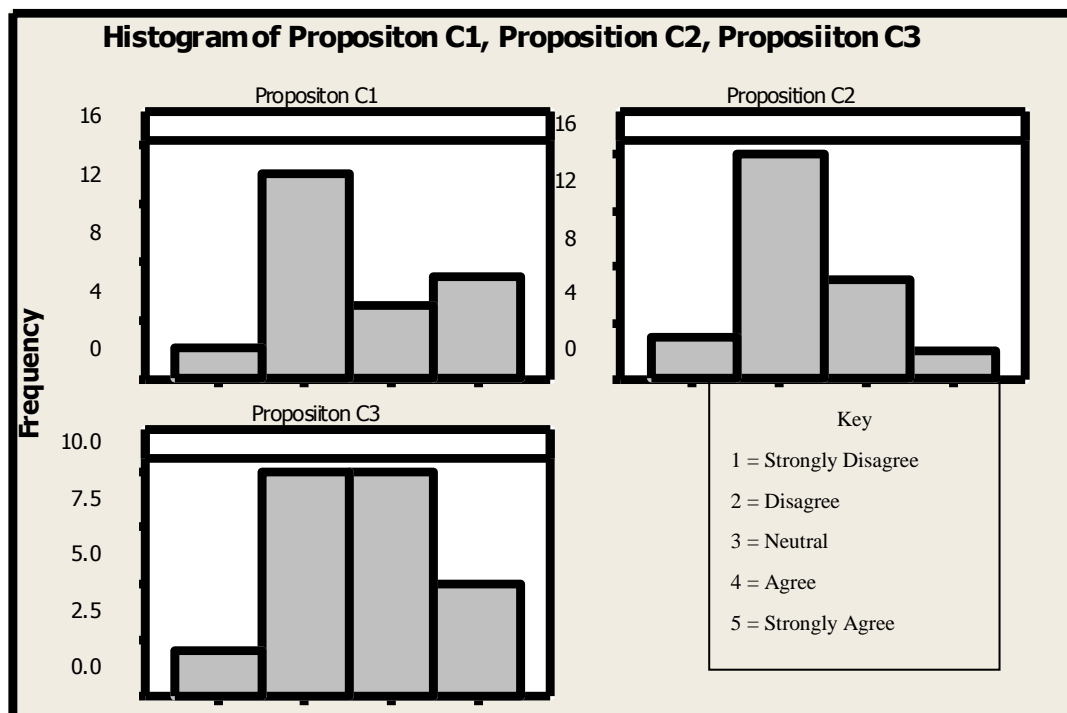
14	Movement into a new market sector	3	5	8	
16	Major capital investment	2	5	7	
16	Downsize	3	4	7	
17	Relocation of some operations overseas	4	2	6	
18	Create a new channel to market	3	2	5	
19	To establish a new division	1	3	4	9
20	Relocation in the UK	2	1	3	
21	Other	1	1	2	
22	Business Turnaround			N/A	6

Table 9 compares the results from this survey with the top reasons for using interims identified by Russam (2005). The categories used in this study and by Russam are not identical and so any comparison should be approached with caution. That said it is reasonable to infer from both data sets that interims are used in a wide variety of what could be described as project based work.

Three other questions in this section tested the idea of flexible resourcing. The proposition was that modern firms are under increasing pressure to reduce head count, and that they may be tempted to do so by the use of temporary managers. The three propositions were:-

- C1 Interim managers are employed to keep permanent head count to a minimum
- C2 Interim managers are employed to keep the senior management team number to a minimum
- C3 Interim managers are employed as a response to pressure to use temporary or contract staff





**Figure 4**

Proposition C1 suggests that interim managers are employed to minimise headcount. To test whether there was a significant difference between the two respondent groups, HR managers and other managers; the sample was first tested using Leven's test equal variance. The resulting p-value was 0.820 which indicates that the variance is not significantly different. The two sample *t*-test gave a probability of equivalence of 0.978, indicating a high degree of equivalence. The two samples were therefore combined. The median result for the two samples was 2. Respondent's either disagreed or strongly disagreed that interim managers are employed to keep head count to a minimum.

A similar result was achieved for proposition C2, with a median result of 2. Interim managers are not employed to keep senior management team members to a minimum.

If proposition C1 and C2 can be said to tend towards strategic resourcing, Proposition 3 can be thought of as a tactical response to resource issues. The proposal is that interim managers are employed as a response to pressure to use temporary or contract staff. The median result for the responses was 3, suggesting that respondents either took a neutral position or rejected the proposition. The groups were tested for equal equivalence using Leven's test which gives a probability of equivalence of 0.981.

Thereafter a two sample *t*-test was undertaken which gave a probability of 0.707 that there is no difference between the means of the groups. Accordingly the proposition can be assessed using data from both groups.

These results suggest that it would be right to reject a hypothesis that interim managers are employed in reaction to either strategic or tactical resourcing pressures.

Table 10 summarises the characteristics that respondents value in interims. All HR respondents agree or strongly agree, and 86% of other managers agree that no employment liability is an important attribute of an interim. However, the results in Table 10 do not particularly privilege this attribute over the other attributes tabulated. Table 10 appears too emphasised that respondents placed more value on the positive aspect of the service to be provided.

**Table 10 Characteristics valued in Interim Managers**

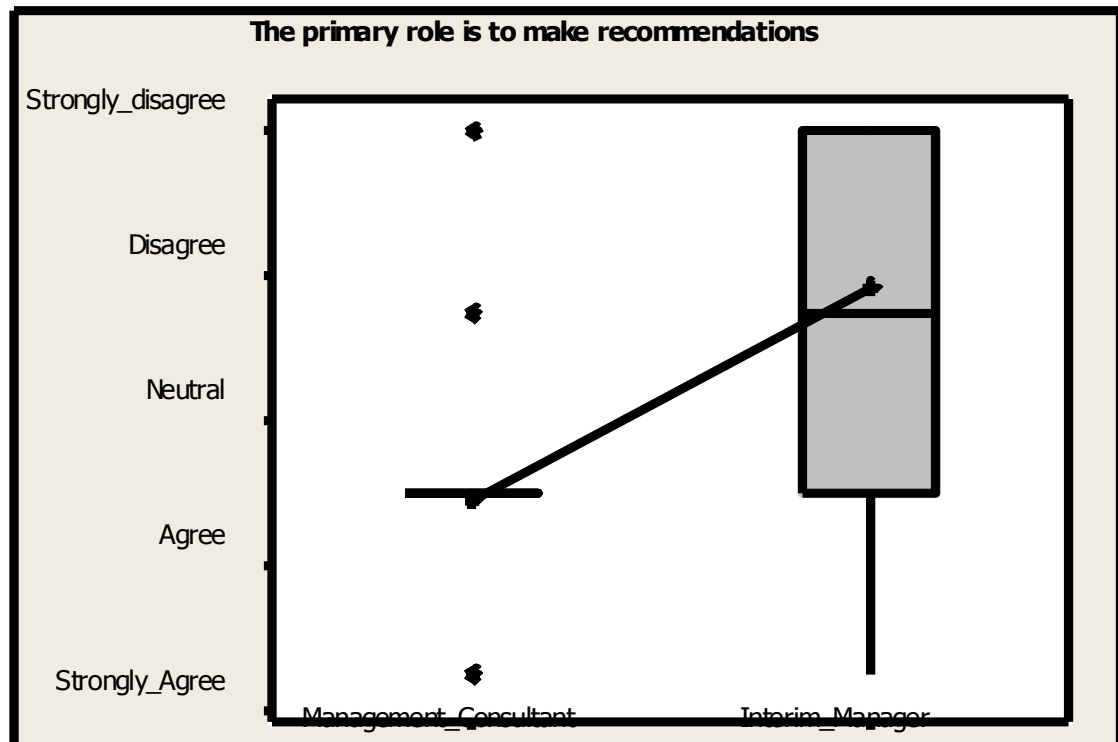
	No of responses	Medium Response	Outcome
Neutral and Objective	27	4	Agree
Specialist Expertise	27	4	Agree
Focus on task	26	4	Agree
Fresh approach	27	4	Agree
Quickly available	27	4	Agree
Bring energy	27	4	Agree
Network of contacts	27	4	Agree
Confident	27	4	Agree
Flexible	27	4	Agree
Leave when required	27	4	Agree
Pragmatic	27	4	Agree
Cost effective	27	4	Agree
Problem solving	27	4	Agree
Broad experience	25	4	Agree
Quick Assessment	26	4	Agree
Fast Results	26	4	Agree
Not a threat	27	3	Neutral
No employer liability	27	3	Neutral
Take hard decisions	26	3	Neutral

Finally, in this section respondents were asked to say to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a statement taken from the Chief Executive of BIE, the UK market leader interim management agency (Executive Grapevine 2005). The quote, that Interim management is the "*...provision of a mature professional manager, well versed by relevant practical experience, either to fill a gap in permanent staff or to project management change within a limited period of time*" (Simms 2003) is generally thought to encapsulate the image of interim management. Twenty seven

respondents expressed their views in relation to the quotation, with an overwhelming majority of both groups, either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the quotation (90% of HR managers, 88% of other managers. Those who did not agree took a neutral position.

### 5.3 Is there a difference between interim managers and management consultants?

Figure 5



The perception of interim managers when compared to consultants was tested using seven pairs of questions utilising the five point Likert scale previously described. The results dramatically illustrated the perception amongst respondents that there is a difference between management consultants and interim managers.

Figure 5 illustrates the data which arose when respondents were asked whether the role of a management consultant or an interim was to make recommendations.

Overwhelming both groups of respondents, HR managers and other managers, responded that management consultants were engaged to make recommendations.

Using a Mann-Whitney test that response was compared to the response where the

same question was posed in relation to interim managers. Here opinions turned about the mid-point, with a median response of 3, reflecting a split of opinion between those who agreed that interims were engaged to make recommendations, and those who were either neutral (6 responses) disagreed (4 responses) or strongly disagreed (2 responses). There was no significant statistical difference between the two groups in the sample: a two sample *t*-test gave a 0.986 probability of equivalence between the samples.

Next respondents were asked whether management consultants or interim managers

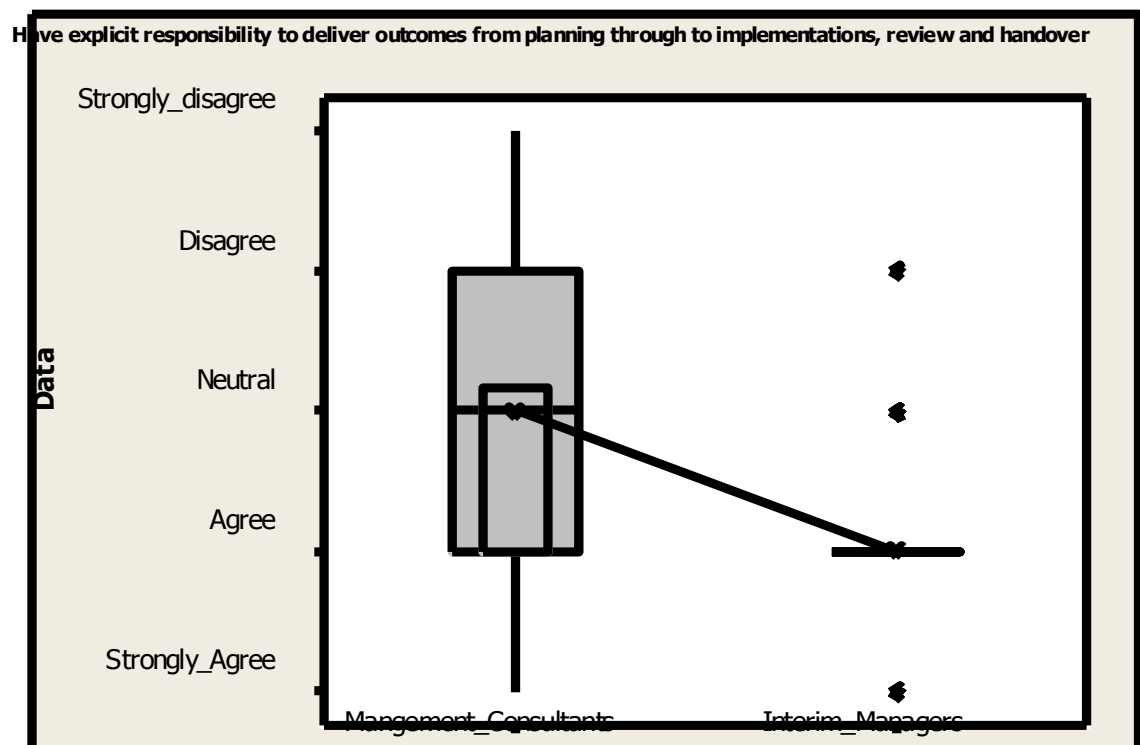
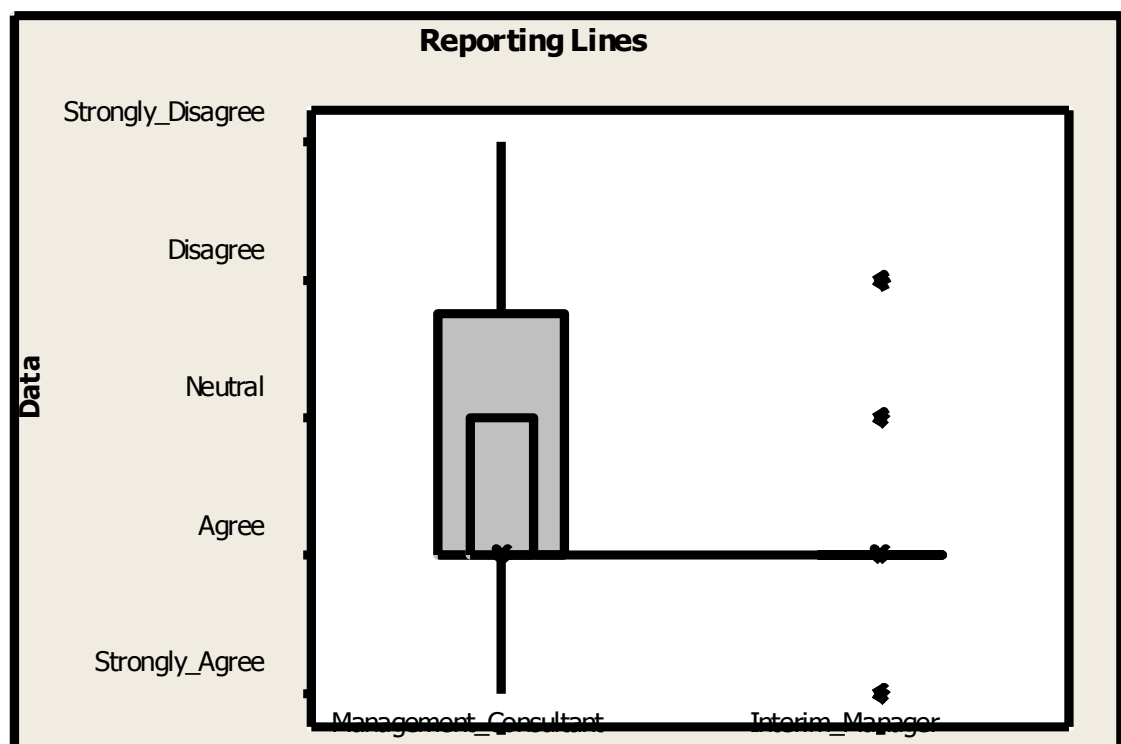


Figure 6

usually have explicit responsibility to deliver outcomes from planning through to implementations, review and handover. The data is illustrated in Figure 6. The presentation of the data in Figure 6 masks a wider spread of opinion between human

resource managers and other managers. In each case the spread of opinion of HR managers was greater than other managers, markedly so in the case of management consultants. However, the means in each data set when tested did not indicate evidence to suggest that there was a difference in the population means at the 95% significance level. Using a two-sample *t*-test the test statistic for the difference between responses between HR managers and other managers in relation to the responsibility of management consultants was 0.97 with 12 degrees of freedom and in relation to interim managers was 0.53 with 10 degrees of freedom, and the critical value was respectively 2.179 and 2.228.

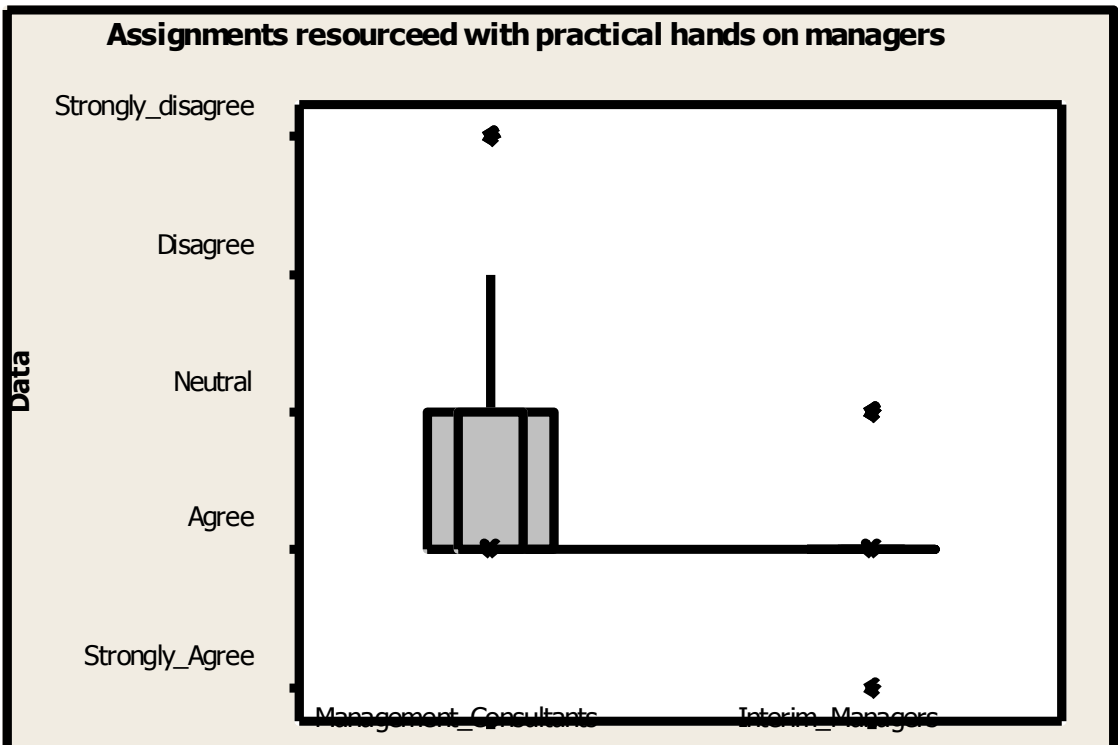
**Figure 7**



As part of a wider enquiry about professionalism, which will be developed in the following section, respondents were asked about reporting lines within assignments.

The proposition was set up that a management consultant's reporting lines were

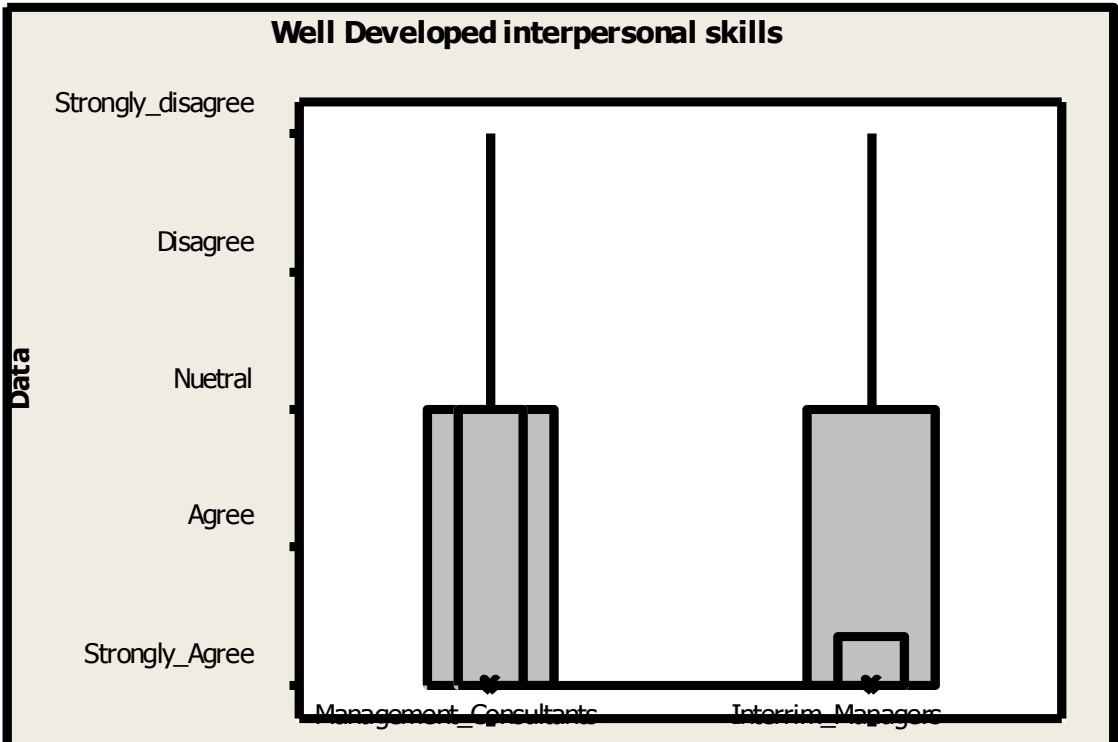
through his or her consultancy whereas an interim manager through their client organisation’s management structure. The proposition attained widespread support in relation to interim managers (Figure 7), but the data for management consultants requires further examination. The spread of the box plot was drawn back by 53% of other managers either being neutral (20%) or disagreeing (33%) with the proposition. Clearly, and in contrast to HR managers the other managers who responded to this question felt in control of their management consultants.



Given the acceptance earlier in the survey that interim managers are experienced managers well versed in practical experience it seems reasonable to test whether this is a differentiator between management consultants and interims. The respondents were asked whether management consultants usually resource assignments with practical hands on managers, and in the case of interims whether interims are practical



hands on managers. The responses are set out in Figure 8. Clearly there is a difference in perception in relation to practical aspects of each role. That spread is caused by the number of other managers who were either neutral or disagreed with the proposition. (53% of respondents) that management consultants resourced assignments with practical hands on assignments, whereas all HR managers but one agreed with the proposition.



**Figure 9**

There was a wide spread general consensus that both interim managers and management consultants have well developed interpersonal skills (See Figure 9).

The consensus does not hold when considering whether individual solutions are provided for each assignment. Generally, all managers disagreed that management consultants offer a bespoke service (see Figure 10). Disregarding neutrals, 3 HR

managers and 7 other managers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposition that management consultants offer a bespoke service, and only two HR managers and four other managers agreed out of an available sample set of 16. The bias towards interim managers providing a bespoke solution is much stronger, but here the median response remains at 2, suggesting that most respondents do not think that interims provide a bespoke service. It is perhaps better put on a footing that neither group provide bespoke service, but that management consultants are less likely than interims to provide such a service.

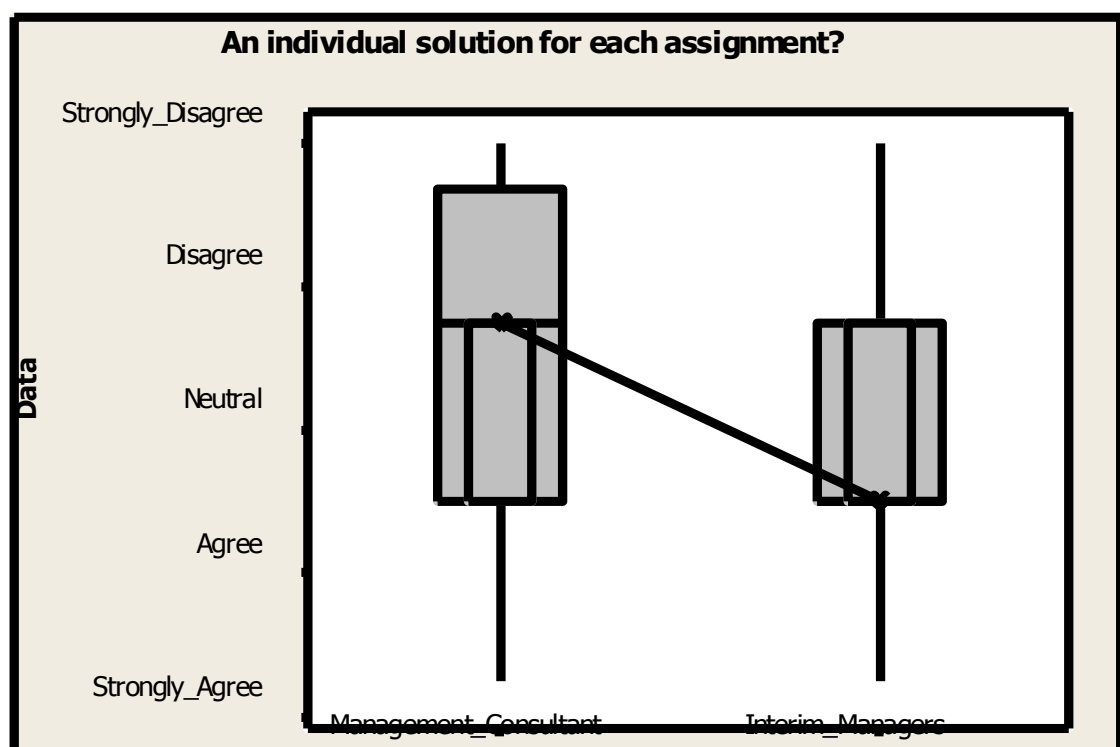


Figure 10

## 5.4 *How professional are interim managers and management consultants.*

Both management consultants and interim managers have a professional association. Respondents were asked whether membership of the relevant professional association was material in making an appointment to an assignment. Overwhelmingly respondents indicated that their attitude to this type of membership ranged from neutral to not at all important in that context (see Figure 11).

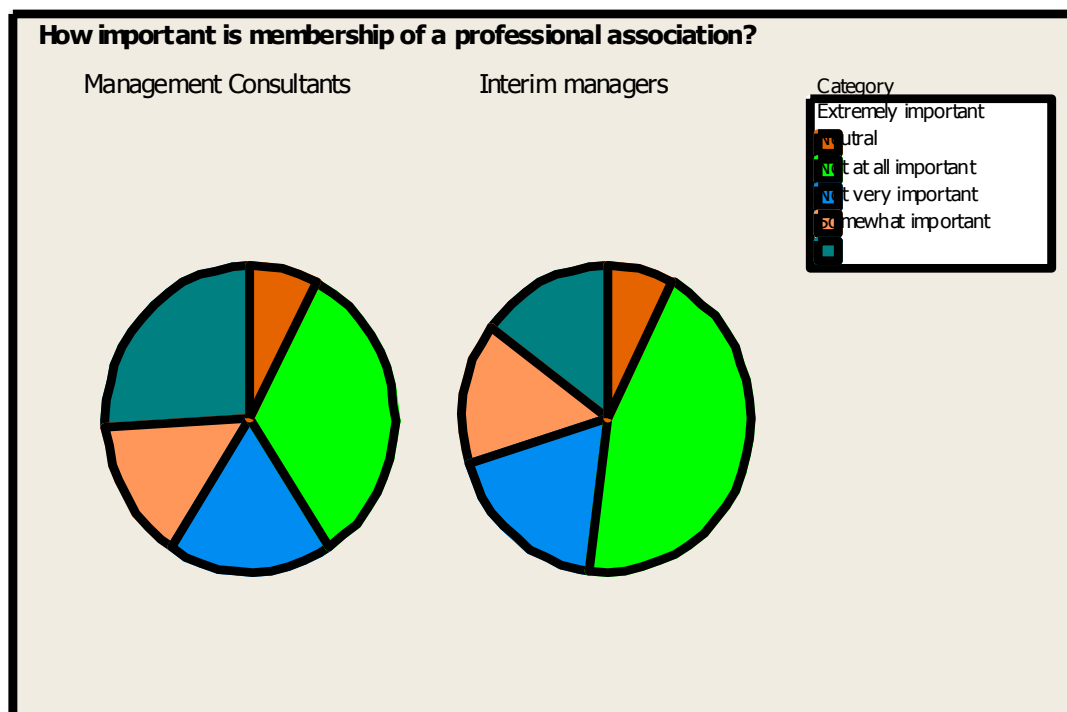
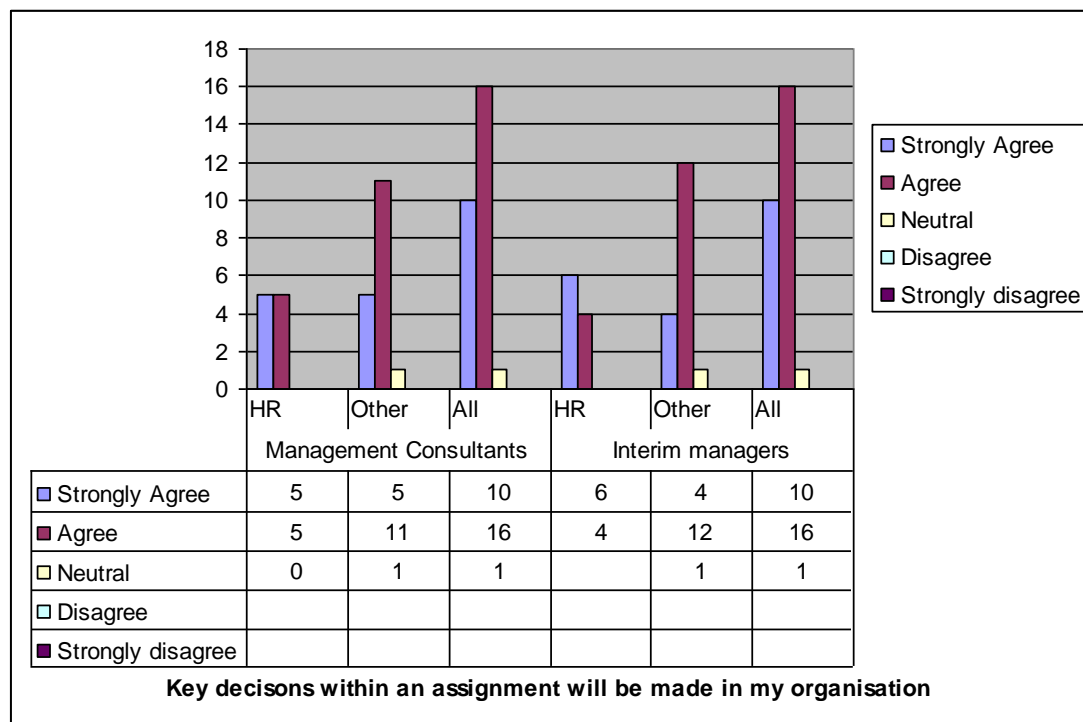


Figure 11  
The idea of professionalism was outlined in section 3.

The perception of professionalism amongst interim managers when compared to consultants was tested using seven pairs of questions utilising the five point Likert scale previously described. The questions were related to Hall's (Hall 1968) domains of professionalism to draw out, particularly the extent of control that an organisation

will have over assignments carried out on its behalf by either interim managers or management consultants. It is hypothesised that an acceptance by the organisation of control of and within the assignment by the interim manager or management consultant is indicative of acceptance of the professionalism of the interim manager or management consultant.

A hallmark of a professional is that he or she operates outside the bureaucracy of a client organisation (Hall 1968), although a professional may very well be embedded in the professional bureaucracy of his or her firm. In testing the level of independence of management consultants and interim managers operating within their firms respondents were asked who makes the key decisions within an assignment. The results of that enquiry are set out in Figure 12.



**Figure 12**

Testing this data using a two sample *t*-test, the 95% confidence level includes (-0.25884, 0.041667) which suggests there is no difference in the equivalence of the means. The p-value of 0.781 suggests that there is no evidence for a difference in respondent's views of the extent to which either management consultants or interim managers may act independently within an assignment.

Table 11 illustrates the results where respondents were asked whether they controlled how assignments will be carried out. Testing this data using a two sample *t*-test, the 95% confidence level (-0.141729, 0.725062) includes 0 which suggests there is no difference in the equivalence of the means. The p-value, of 0.182, is above the 5% significance level so there is no evidence to suggest a difference in control between the two occupational groups. The spread of respondents views suggest that most respondents believe themselves to be in control of how assignments are carried out, but the strength of that belief is only marginally stronger where the assignment is carried out by interim managers.

**Table 11 The way in which assignments will be carried out will be determined by my organisation**

<b>Strongly agree</b>	4	<b>Strongly agree</b>	5
<b>Agree</b>	17	<b>Agree</b>	20
<b>Neutral</b>	3	<b>Neutral</b>	1
<b>Disagree</b>	3	<b>Disagree</b>	1
<b>N=</b>	27	<b>N=</b>	27
<b>*=</b>	1	<b>*=</b>	1

Table 12 is concerned with day to day control of delivery of services. Testing this data using a two sample *t*-test, the 95% confidence level (-0.030419, 0.997810) includes 0 which suggests there is no difference in the equivalence of the means. The p-value, of 0.065, is above the 5% significance level so there is no evidence to suggest a difference in control between the two occupational groups. The spread of respondents views suggest that most respondents believe themselves to be in control of how assignments are carried out, but the strength of that belief is only stronger where the assignment is carried out by interim managers.

**Table 12 My Organisation will be in day to day control of the delivery of service.**

<b>Strongly agree</b>	2	<b>Strongly agree</b>	6
<b>Agree</b>	13	<b>Agree</b>	14
<b>Neutral</b>	6	<b>Neutral</b>	6
<b>Disagree</b>	5	<b>Disagree</b>	1
<b>N=</b>	26	<b>N=</b>	27
<b>*=</b>	2	<b>*=</b>	1

Table 13 sets out respondents views when asked whether consultants or interim managers will be bound by organisational rules when engaged on an assignment. Testing this data using a two sample *t*-test, the 95% confidence level (-0.035602, 0.95226) includes 0 which suggests there is no difference in the equivalence of the means. The p-value, of 0.068, is above the 5% significance level so there is no evidence to suggest a difference in control between the two occupational groups.

Table 13 Consultants and interim managers working within my organisation will accept that they are bound by my organisations rules

<b>Strongly agree</b>	8	<b>Strongly agree</b>	7
<b>Agree</b>	10	<b>Agree</b>	19
<b>Neutral</b>	5	<b>Neutral</b>	1
<b>Disagree</b>	4		
<b>N=</b>	27	<b>N=</b>	27
<b>*</b>	1	<b>*=</b>	1

Table 14 goes to the heart of expertise. Respondents were asked whether consultants and interim managers working within their organisation are generally required to address the situations they encounter using similar techniques to those the respondents would have used. Testing the responses using a two sample *t*-test, the 95% confidence level (0.175466, 1.324534) does not include 0 which suggests there is a difference in the equivalence of the means. The p-value, of .012, is below the 5% significance level so there is evidence to suggest a difference between the two occupational groups. The data strongly suggests that management consultants will have more freedom in how they address situations.

Table 14 Consultants and interim managers working within my organisation will generally be required to address situations they encounter using similar techniques to those we would use

<b>Strongly agree</b>	1	<b>Strongly agree</b>	3
<b>Agree</b>	7	<b>Agree</b>	13
<b>Neutral</b>	6	<b>Neutral</b>	5
<b>Disagree</b>	11	<b>Disagree</b>	6
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	2		
<b>N=</b>	27	<b>N=</b>	27
<b>*=</b>	1	<b>*=</b>	1

Table 15 is concerned with how management consultants and interims are treated whilst working in client organisations. The table illustrates that there is a substantial difference in treatment between the two roles. Interim managers tend to be treated in much the same way as employees.

**Table 15 Generally we will treat consultants and interim managers working within our organisation in the same way as we treat our own employees**

<b>Strongly agree</b>	2	<b>Strongly agree</b>	4
<b>Agree</b>	9	<b>Agree</b>	17
<b>Neutral</b>	6	<b>Neutral</b>	6
<b>Disagree</b>	7	<b>Disagree</b>	
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	2	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	



N=	26		27
*=	2	*=	1

Table 16 addresses a key issue of professionalism, to whom is loyalty owed in an assignment. Testing the responses using a two sample t-test, the 95% confidence level (0.232075, 1.267925) does not include 0 which suggests there is a difference in the equivalence of the means. The p-value, of .006, is below the 5% significance level so there is evidence to suggest a difference between the two occupational groups. The data strongly suggests that interims primary loyalty will be to their assignment client.

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**Table 16 A consultant' or an interim manager's primary loyalty will be to my organisation**

<b>Strongly agree</b>	3	<b>Strongly agree</b>	3
<b>Agree</b>	6	<b>Agree</b>	13
<b>Neutral</b>	8	<b>Neutral</b>	9
<b>Disagree</b>	8	<b>Disagree</b>	2
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	2		
N=	27	N=	27
*=	1	*=	1

## **6 Discussion**

### ***Is there a difference between interim managers and executives?***

The data appears to present a paradox. In accepting proposition A4, that there is no difference between interim managers and executives, it might be supposed that respondents would disagree with propositions A1, A2 and A3 which seek to understand what that difference is. In part this paradox might arise from instrument design. Had respondents been asked to complete their responses to A1, A2 and A3 only if they agreed with proposition A1, then the paradox would not have arisen. But that option was not put to them and it is necessary to recognise the inconsistency in the response. Such a clear anomaly suggests that further research into this question is justified.

### ***What are interim managers used for?***

There is strong support for the proposition that interim managers fill both role assignments, they bridge temporary gaps in an organisations hierarchy, and function assignments, and they manage specific activities over a period of time. But in terms of the types of assignments undertaken, role assignments take fourth place in Table 9, and, per Russam (2005), seventh, where the role is to cover a temporary absence and tenth place where the need is to gather a gap in recruitment. This outcome goes some way to confirm anecdotal evidence that the interim market is moving away from

bridging gaps in a management's hierarchy and towards the provision of specialist skills, but further research is required.

Propositions C1, C2 and C3 tested whether pressure to adopt flexible employment strategies were material in understanding the growth in the interim market. The evidence provided by the responses suggests managers are not responding to pressures to keep head count to a minimum. Further work is required but it is possible to speculate, having put the traditional core-periphery notions of numeric and financial flexibility (Legge 1995) to one side, that the survey results reflect both of Benner's (2002) characteristics of flexibility, flexibility in work and flexibility in employment relations. The idea of flexibility in work suggests an outsourcing of Atkinson's (1984) functional flexibility. In Atkinson's model functional flexibility was provided by core workers who were able to be deployed between activities and tasks to match changing workloads. Those core workers necessarily have a skill level that enables them to be deployed in this way. Benner's notion of flexible work effectively outsources that functional flexibility to skilled contract labour and in doing so accepts market risk in return for financial and numeric flexibility.

### ***Is there a difference between management consultants and interim managers?***

The survey suggests that there is a perceived difference between management consultants and interim managers. Unsurprisingly clients expect management consultants to make recommendations, and interim managers to deliver solutions. That result fits well with widespread anecdotal evidence where interim managers

claim that they are often employed to follow on from management consultants to implement the consultant's recommendations. This outcome is also entirely consistent with the reported perception that interims are practical hands on managers (Figure 8), but note that here there was a difference in relation to management consultants; HR managers consider that those consultants they employ are also practical and hands on. Why this result has arisen requires further investigation but it is possible to speculate that HR managers are more likely than not to employ HR specialists from management consultants and are consequently better able to form a judgement about their competence. Similar reasoning may be applied to the general agreement about the practical abilities of interim managers. It is hypothesised that interim managers are more likely than not to have skill sets which are recognisable to clients and might be very similar to those of the engaging client.

The divergence between interim managers and management consultants is carried over into the type of service provided. Neither interim managers nor management consultants are generally seen as providers of bespoke services; but the perception that interim managers might provide bespoke services is stronger. However, that perception should be thought of as a bias towards bespoke rather than a resounding endorsement that interims do in fact provide such a service.

### ***How professional are interim managers and management consultants?***

The professional thesis outlined in section 3 at its heart the idea that professionals have control in their working environment but that they exercise that control in favour

of their clients. The survey responses suggest that control is firmly vested in the Client in respect of both interim managers and management consultants. This is a somewhat surprising outcome given the nature of consultancy work and the roles that respondents earlier identified as being suitable for interim managers. Much will turn on what respondents understand key decisions to be and these results suggest further enquiry is necessary.

The survey results appear to suggest that respondents will generally seek control of the detail of the assignment and may be required to utilise similar techniques to those used by their assignment client in addressing the situations they meet. Again this is a response which is surprising given earlier response as it negates the benefit of bringing the specialist skills of the consultant and the interim into the assignment clients business. Again the result suggests the need for further enquiry.

Interim managers tend to be treated as if they were employees of their clients, Table 15. In itself that should not be surprising as the nature of interim work requires a higher level of integration into a client's business than would a consultancy assignment. Nevertheless, further investigation is required to see whether the level of integration varies between role and assignment interims.

A hallmark of professionalism is that clients' interests are put before the professionals. Insofar as loyalty is a proxy for interest interim managers are perceived to subsume their own interests in favour of the client to a greater extent than management consultants.

This latter point aside there is insufficient evidence from this survey to support the professional thesis.

## 7 Conclusions

The paper specifically investigates four issues, what are interim managers used for, what characteristics client's value in interim managers, how do interim managers compare with management consultants and can interim managers and management consultants be considered to be professional.

There is clear evidence that interim managers are used in both role and project assignments. The evidence also suggests that role assignments are just one of a number of assignments undertaken by interims. A difference between clients perception of management consultants and interims is established, but there is little evidence that client's perceive either service as a professional offering.

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# Appendix 1

Covering letter for survey

Dear Mr Harris,

I am presently undertaking a project to investigate the role of interims in today's work place as part of my Doctorate of Business Administration at Nottingham Business School. I believe that you are well placed to provide an objective view of the current situation and I would appreciate your help in completing a short survey about interims. Over the past decade or so, the use of interim managers has increased in all sectors of the economy; but what interim managers do, how their services differ from the services of management consultants and what benefits they bring to the organisations they work for is not well understood or researched. I will gladly forward a copy of the summary report if you complete the contact details at the end of the survey.

The questionnaire should not take more than about 10 minutes to complete.

To complete the study go to:

<http://www.strategic-change.co.uk/>

Then, just follow the directions provided within the survey.

If you experience any problems accessing the site please try the following: Copy and Paste the link into the Internet Address window. Please make sure it is on one single line and without any spacing.

I would appreciate you submitting the survey in the next few days. As always, your responses will be kept completely confidential.

Remember, if you would like a summary of the results please complete your contact details at the end of the survey. Thank you for your participation in my research.

Yours sincerely

## Appendix 2

### *Why do organisations use interim managers?*

Interim managers are used in a variety of ways by the organisations that employ them. Our first questions are concerned with understanding how and in what circumstances organisations use interim managers. Please complete as many of the questions as you feel able even if your organisation has not employed interims. We are interested in your opinion whether or not you have experience of using interim managers.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
An interim manager is normally engaged to fill a temporary gap in an organisational hierarchy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim managers are employed to keep permanent head count to a minimum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim managers are employed to keep the senior management team number to a minimum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim managers are employed as a response to pressure to use temporary or contract staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An interim manager is normally engaged to project manage change within a limited period	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

of time					
Interim management is the:-  <i>"...provision of a mature professional manager,  well versed by relevant practical experience,  either to fill a gap in permanent staff or to  project management change within a limited  period of time."</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Why would you consider using an interim? Select as many as appropriate

- ☐ To gain access to specialist skills
- ☐ Launch a new product or service
- ☐ The expansion of an existing business
- ☐ Expansion into a new geographical market
- ☐ The acquisition of a new business
- ☐ Movement into a new market sector
- ☐ Major capital investment
- ☐ Create a new channel to market
- ☐ Manage a change management programme
- ☐ Relocation in the UK
- ☐ To deploy a major new technology

- ☐ Downsize
- ☐ Relocation of some operations overseas
- ☐ Restructure a business
- ☐ Outsourcing
- ☐ Merge with another company
- ☐ To develop a new strategy
- ☐ To implement a new strategy
- ☐ For a special project
- ☐ Management Mentoring
- ☐ Management coaching
- ☐ To establish a new division
- ☐ To cover a temporary absence
- ☐ Other

### ***Are all interim managers equal?***

3. Some interim management agencies claim a distinction between interim executives and interim managers. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
--	----------	-------	---------	----------	----------

	agree				disagree
Interim executives can be distinguished from interim managers as executives work at or near Board level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim executives can be distinguished from interim managers because executives act as consultants to the Board	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim executives can be distinguished from interim managers because executives act as consultants to senior management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is no difference between Interim Executives and Interim Managers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### ***What qualities are important in an interim manager?***

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following qualities are important in an interim manager/executive?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Broad experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Neutral and Objective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specialist Expertise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Focus on task	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fresh approach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quick Assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fast Results	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quickly available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take hard decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bring energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Network of contacts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confident	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flexible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leave when required	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Pragmatic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cost effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Problem solving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not a threat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No employer liability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### ***Management consultants and Interim managers***

The distinction between interim managers and consultants is not always clear. The following set of questions identifies a number of dimensions that might clarify that distinction.

5. In relation to management consultants to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
--	-------------------	-------	---------	----------	----------------------

The primary role of a management consultant is to make recommendations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management consultants usually have explicit responsibility to deliver outcomes from planning through to implementations, review and handover	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A management consultants reporting lines are through his or her consultancy firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management consultants usually resource assignments with practical hands on managers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The resources provided by management consultants to work on site usually have well developed interpersonal skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management consultants rely on good references from previous work to get future work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management consultants usually develop an individual solution for each assignment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. In relation to interim managers to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The primary role of an interim manager is to make recommendations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim managers usually have explicit responsibility to deliver outcomes from planning through to implementations, review and handover	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An interim managers reporting lines are through the client organisation's management structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim managers are usually practical hands on managers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim managers usually have well developed interpersonal skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim managers rely on good references from previous work to get future work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim managers usually develop an individual solution for each assignment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. In your judgement if you employed a management consultancy

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Key decisions within the assignment will be made by my organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The way in which the assignment is carried out will be determined by my organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation will be in the day to day control of delivery of the service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consultants working within my organisation will accept that they are bound by my organisation's rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consultants working within my organisation will generally be required to address situations they encounter using similar techniques to those my organisation would use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Generally consultants working within my organisation will be treated in the same way as we treat our own employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The consultant's primary loyalty will be to my organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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8. In your judgement if you employed an interim manager

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Key decisions within the assignment will be made by my organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The way in which the assignment is carried out will be determined by my organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation will be in the day to day control of delivery of the service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim managers working within my organisation will accept that they are bound by my organisations rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interim managers working within my organisation will generally be required to address situations they encounter using similar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

techniques to those my organisation would use					
Generally interim managers working within my organisation will be treated in the same way as we treat our own employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An interim manager's primary loyalty will be to my organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### ***The importance of being a professional consultant or interim***

9. Although the individuals who practice as management consultants and interim managers often have professional qualifications, some are also members of either the Institute of Management Consultancy or the Institute of Interim Managers. In considering an appointment would the following issues be material

	Extremely important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Not very important	Not at all important
That the employees of a management consultancy are members of the Institute of Management Consultancy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
That a candidate for appointment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

to an interim management role is a member of the Institute of Interim managers					
--	--	--	--	--	--

## ***Does your company use interims?***

We need to know a little about the extent to which your organisation has experience of using interims

10. Has your organisation used an interim managers in the last 12 months?

☐ yes

☐ no

11. Does your organisation currently employ interims?

☐ Yes

☐ No

12. Does your company plan to use interim managers in the future

We do not use interim managers	We currently use interim managers and will continue to do so	We currently use interim managers but are unlikely to do so in the	We have no current plans to use interim managers but may do so if a need is
--------------------------------	--	--	---



		future	identified
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. if your company has used an interim manager in the last 12 months, indicate your level of satisfaction with the services provided.

Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. In your organisation who normally decides to employ an interim manager

☐ The Chief Executive

☐ Finance Director

☐ The Human Resource Director

☐ Functional Director in whose area the interim will work

☐ The Human Resource Director and the Functional Director acting together

☐ Other (please specify)

15. What is your primary job function

- ☐ Chief Executive
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Operations
- ☐ Information Technology
- ☐ Other

### ***Your organisation***

It may be that how you answer this questionnaire will determined by factors like the size of your organisation or the sector in which you work. It's helpful therefore to know a little about your organisation.

16. What Industry is your organisation in?

- ☐ Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- ☐ Mining and Quarrying
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Electricity, Gas and Water supply
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Wholesale
- ☐ Retail
- ☐ Hotels, Storage and Communications

- ☐ Financial Services
- ☐ Real Estate and Property
- ☐ Computing and Business Services
- ☐ Research and Development
- ☐ Public Administration
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Other Community and Personal Services
- ☐ Other please specify

17. How many employees does your company have?

- ☐ Less than 99
- ☐ 100 to 249
- ☐ 250 to 499
- ☐ 500 - 999
- ☐ 1000-1999
- ☐ 2000-4999
- ☐ More than 5000

18. What is your Company's annual turnover

- ☐ Less than £1 million
- ☐ More than £1million but less than £2 million
- ☐ More than £2 million bit less than £5 million
- ☐ More than £5 million but less than £10 million
- ☐ More than £10 million but less than £20 million
- ☐ More than 20 million but less than £50 million
- ☐ More than £50 million
- ☐ I do not know or I am unwilling to disclose

***Would you like a copy of the summary of the survey results?***

19. This section is optional. Please fill out this section, if you would like a summary of the survey results sent to you or if you are willing to take part in further research

First Name	<input type="text"/>
Last Name	<input type="text"/>
Address 1	<input type="text"/>
Address 2	<input type="text"/>
Address 3	<input type="text"/>
County	<input type="text"/>
Postal Code	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>
Contact telephone number	<input type="text"/>

20. This question is optional. Please indicate if you are willing to take part in follow up research.

☐ I am willing to take part in further research

Submission

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# Interim Management

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An Enquiry into Praxis

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Jeffrey Tyrrell

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Submitted in Part Fulfilment of the Requirements for a  
Doctorate in Business Administration  
Awarded by  
Nottingham Business School

## Abstract

This paper contributes to the body of knowledge of interim management, through a process of interview, the development of an extended case study and reflection on practice. It develops a theory of interim management that conceptualises interim managers as process consultants working at an individual level in organisational development. It draws a distinction between instrumental stopgap contracting, functional consulting and consultancy. Interim managers largely operate as functional consultants, but bring to assignments the wider set of skills of process consulting. Their effectiveness is partially derived from their ability to bridge across organisational groups, and their ability to distinguish between organizational politics and the “back staging” required to deliver their assignments. Clients look for relevant sector experience in engaging interim managers and this constrains interim managers in offering cross sector services. Interim managers demonstrate value to organisations through the development of the staff they work with in the delivery of assignments.

This paper report on the author’s first person action research into his practice as an interim manager which draws on the research described, on reflection on that research and the author’s practice as an interim manager. It has enabled the author to relate his practice to theory, to the practice of other interim managers, and provided an opportunity to think through issues of personal values and developmental needs.

The paper also develops a viewpoint of the nature of knowledge, locates that viewpoint in the context of management education, and presents a conceptual argument that positions deficiencies in management education as a driver for the development of the interim management market.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This is the fifth in a series of papers submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a doctorate in business administration awarded by the Nottingham Business School. The papers contribute to a better understanding of the work of interim managers and the process of interim management, but also support my development as an interim manager through a process of heuristic inquiry (Etherington, 2004, p. 111), leading to the discovery of the “essence of the person in experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32). That discovery is also a learning outcome of the Nottingham Business School DBA. Students are normally required to submit six papers, the last being a reflective paper on the experience of working towards a DBA. With the permission of my supervisors, I present that reflection in this paper.

In Tyrrell (2006) I identified a spread in interim management roles between gap-filling and change management. My earlier work (Tyrrell, 2004a, 2006) indicated a desire by interim managers to distance themselves from “high-level management temps”. In Tyrrell (2006) I showed that employers clearly distinguish between interim managers and consultants, except where the distinction is between HR interims and HR consultants. Typically, consultants are engaged in order to make recommendations, but interim managers and HR consultants deliver solutions “through a practical, hands-on approach” (Tyrrell, 2006, p. 47).

The research reported in my previous papers provides an insight into what interim managers do. Tyrrell (2004a) describes how they manage assignments. Each paper contributes to what is known as interim management but does not describe the “practical, hands-on approach”. That expression is directly relevant to an understanding of interim management practice and my goals of validating and improving my practice as an interim manager.

Academic research has largely ignored interim management and interim managers (Goss and Bridson, 1998, p. 37). There has been some interest in the psychological contract of interim managers (Inkson et al., 2001), including their personality traits (Feltham and Hughes, 1999), thoughts on the cost benefit of their employment (Weingart, 2003), function in delivering innovation (Storey et al., 2002), and role in higher education (McWilliam et al., 2008). The primary source of information on interim management is the practitioner press or books written by interim managers; see, for example, Clutterbuck and Dearlove (1999), Golzen (1992), Lovegrove (2007), McGovern and Russell (2001) and Russell (2001).

Goss and Bridson (1998) characterise the practitioner press as a marketing exercise that positions interim management as a service to be sold, distinct from “mere temping and its pejorative associations”, provided by high-quality managers whose use will confer competitive advantage. The interim managers’ biographies identified uncritically take the same position. Goss and Bridson suggest the area is open to further research and challenge. That challenge is taken up in this series of papers through consideration of five uncertainties: Who are interim managers, what do they do, why do they do it, why are they asked to do it and how do they do it?

I could not investigate interim management without thinking about my own practice as an interim manager. Doing so would put the cart before the horse. My first objective is to understand and reflect on my practice as an interim manager: What do I do well, and what areas do I need to improve in? Establishing this benchmark is crucial. What does ‘good’ look like in the context of interim management? Understanding the roles of others provides a standard against which I can judge my own work. Writing about what I and others do as interim managers provides a reflective mechanism through which I can improve my own practice.

The limited coverage of interim management in the literature closes that route as a reference of good practice. The need to establish a benchmark led to the enquiry into the practice of interim management summarised in chapter seven. Anchoring their and my practice in the literature enabled me to link practice with theory.

This research has three contexts: interim management, my objectives from the programme and the requirements of the programme.

### *1.1. The Interim Management Context*

Despite the recession in the fourth quarter of 2009, Interim Management Association (IMA) members had 1,550 assignments on their books (Ipsos MORI., 2010), averaging 53 executives per IMA member. The mix has changed since 2006, with over 45% of assignments now in the public sector and a marked decline in the HR sector. Table 1 breaks down the market by assignment and shows the change in assignment type during the reported period.

Table 1 The Interim Market 2009 (Ipsos MORI., 2010)

<b>Job Function: Highest Demand</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>Q4 2009</b>
Change transition management	25%	13%
Programme/project management	24%	36%
Business improvement	22%	14%
Gap management	16%	24%
Other	13%	13%

Sambrook (2000) reports a market of about 2,400 practicing interim managers; the CBI Business Guide to Interim Executives (BIE, n.d.) suggests that there are “a few hundred” interims. These figures understate the market size. Not all providers are members of the IMA, and only around 50% of assignments are resources through agencies (Russam, 2005; Russell, 1998). Based on these figures, the best estimate of the number of working interims is about 3,000, although interviews with interim management agents (Chapter 7) suggest that many more managers want interim management work.

There is no common definition of interim management or interim managers. Interim managers and their employers distinguish this role from that of a consultant (Tyrrell, 2004a). Interim managers are not temporary gap fillers—“high-powered management temps”, as one interviewee put it; however, employers recognise a significant, but perhaps diminishing, “gap-filling role” for them (Tyrrell, 2006). Goss and Bridson (1998) describe gap-filling roles as instrumental resourcing, a topic that is further discussed in Chapter 5.

In Tyrrell (2006) I found that employer-respondents expect their interim managers to be practical and hands-on. My research suggests two further questions: what do managers do, and what do the terms *practical* and *hands-on* mean? In other words, what do interim managers do, and how do they do it?

In Chapter 3 I describe the difficulty of carrying out a literature search in a field that has had limited attention from researchers. I also discuss the emergent approach I have taken to resolve that difficulty. As an outcome of that approach, I have refocused my research on the second question: How do they do it?

The interim managers interviewed in 2004 were, in Goss and Bridson’s (1998) terms, functional consultants (Chapter 5). The interim managers interviewed I interviewed for this paper were selected because they were gap-filling as line managers within an organisational

hierarchy. Goss and Bridson call individuals who fill these roles “managerial temps” and suggest the roles are primarily about keeping a seat warm during periods of absence. The evidence suggests this characterisation is wrong. The interim managers interviewed describe their role as change agents who use their knowledge and experience to develop the organisation (Chapter 7). They identify knowledge transfer as a key element of the role of interim manager. These views are confirmed by interim management agents (Chapter 7). The theory of interim management that emerges places interim managers in a context of organisational development and knowledge as well as knowledge transfer.

### *1.2. A Personal Context*

In this section, I deal with two whys: why a DBA, and why a DBA about interim management? I also discuss my concern about researching interim management in the context of a DBA programme. I show how I resolved that concern and, in doing so, start a discussion about the nature of knowledge, which is one of the core themes of the paper.

“Why bother?” is a reasonable question. It might have been asked by the interim management agent who pointed to the post-nominal letters on my CV and suggested I “lose them, as nobody is interested”. In Mini Case Study 1 I illustrate the positive discrimination against qualified candidates I saw whilst working at an investment bank. Edward is not anti-qualification per se, but, as he says, he wants a team to get on with the work and not argue that there might be a better way of doing things. Formal qualifications can be a disadvantage in an occupation where experience—“been there, done that”—appears to be the overriding consideration.

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#### Mini Case Study 1 No Value in Qualifications

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Edward, whom I interviewed for my third submission (Tyrrell, 2004a) in this series, and I were working in an investment bank—he as the programme director and me as a programme manager and his deputy. We needed to recruit up to 70 technical specialists to work on the bank’s Euro conversion through a competitive process amongst a selected group of agents, each of whom could submit only four CVs per post. Even so, we had something short of 1,200 CVs to review. Edward’s selection criteria involved first discarding any candidate with a Ph.D. and then looking very carefully at any with a Master’s degree to ensure a depth of practical experience.

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Collins (1998) writes that managers do not like theory or the idea that what they do is derived from theory. A thoughtful IT director told me managers are generally expected not to need reference books in their daily work. It is important to be seen working; if reading a book or journal is anything, it is acquiring the knowledge needed to work. He reads extensively but does so off site, away from the scrutiny of colleagues and subordinates.

Many of the managers I work with have higher qualifications, frequently MBAs, but do not appear to utilise their academic knowledge at work. They compartmentalise their academic and professional lives. This observation is supported in the literature; Angwin et al. (2009) shows that chief strategy officers do not use the tools of analysis learned while earning their MBAs.

Why then did I think a DBA a good idea? There is a danger of post-rationalisation, as I did not record my motivation at the time. Nonetheless, I clearly recall a desire to take my management education further; my MBA left too many unanswered questions.

Scott et al. (2004) identify three theories of motivation for professional doctorate candidates. Types 1 and 2 are interested in career development or external reward. Type 3 has a desire for personal and professional affirmation. Scott et al. (2004) describe three type 3 characteristics that I recognise in myself. First, candidates are driven by curiosity about themselves and the work they do. Candidates see the process in the context of personal development. Second, candidates tend to be more interested in the research process than the product of the research. This seems related to the third characteristic: candidates seek external validation of their existing expertise through their studies. From that perspective the purpose of a DBA is in the research process and in the validation of one's practice.

My choice was to earn either a Ph.D. or a DBA. The distinction between these awards is important, but I doubt that I was much aware of it when entering the programme. I recall literature describing the programme, none of which I now have, that emphasised the equivalence of the awards rather than their distinctions. I think that is a mistake, as academic parity fails to acknowledge the unique value of each award. That difference in knowledge production makes the awards distinctively different. I deal with that difference shortly.

My draft research proposal was about change management. I thought my experience as an interim manager gave me an opportunity, as a participant observer, to report on the process of



change over an extended period. On further reflection, I realized the proposal would have been challenging to complete. The project, at the end of the DBA cycle, would end up with a very different outcome than the original assignment intended. In addition, the problems of access and consent may have been difficult to work around.

My supervisors were interested in my work as an interim manager. They said that little was known about interim management, and it was worth pursuing. In agreeing, I did not give much thought to what this change of direction meant in the context of a professional doctorate. Working that out has been an important part of the story of my DBA.

I have struggled to put a boundary around the scope of the subject, which is necessary in order to deal with it in the context of a professional doctorate. Colin Fisher, one of my supervisors, said that the summary of my inquiry—what do interim managers do, and in what circumstances should they be asked to do it?—felt like pure research, something fit for a Ph.D. While thinking about the problem, I wrote a number of memos about the nature of knowledge. Doing so clarified the issues for me and enabled me to develop two goals: contributing to the knowledge about interim management and exploring my personal development as an interim manager. The following discussion is based on the most recent of these memos.

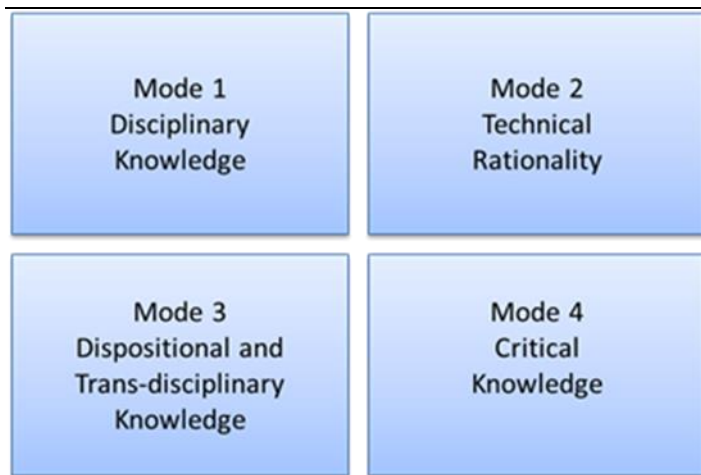
Gibbons et al.'s (1994) typology of knowledge differentiates between Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge. Mode 1 is created in a disciplinary, primarily cognitive, context, and Mode 2 in broader, transdisciplinary social and economic contexts (Gibbons et al., 1994, p. 1). The latter emerges from the disciplinary matrix of the former (Gibbons et al., 1994, p. 18) but can be distinguished from Mode 1 on two counts; it combines interdisciplinary knowledge and is not produced in universities (Gibbons et al., 1994, p. 8), the traditional sites of knowledge creation. Mode 2 has a close association with the marketisation of scientific knowledge (Gibbons et al., 1994, p. 91). Gibbons et al. place the production of Mode 2 knowledge primarily in commercial activity and in a commercial context.

The distinction is not between pure and applied science and technology. Mode 2 knowledge integrates discovery, application and use (Gibbons et al., 1994, p. 46) and does so through the distribution of knowledge through socialisation (Gibbons et al., 1994, p. 19). Sarros et al. (2005, p. 42) describe Mode 2 learning "... as a form of technical rationality that has

workplace relevance and application”, and Scott et al. (2004) consider it as “something which makes the workplace a more efficient and more productive place”.

Based on a symposium paper presented by Alison Lee in 1997, Scott et al. (2004, p. 42) categorise knowledge in a different way (Figure 2). They argue that Gibbons et al.’s dyad is based on an outdated view of university education. It “...fails to take account of practises that are trans-disciplinary, practicum-sourced, hierarchical and form-preserving. Furthermore, within the professional doctorate itself, knowledge may originate from and within professional practice, and yet the solution for the practitioner (controlled and ultimately by the university as disciplinary knowledge) may be found within the disciplinary practice” (Scott et al., 2004, p. 41–42)

Figure 1 Scott et al.’s (2004) Typology of Knowledge



Scott et al.’s argument is founded on the singularity of professional doctorate praxis, but can be generalised. They conclude that Mode 2 knowledge might be developed in a university environment, but the bifurcation of knowledge proposed by Gibbons et al. does not accommodate all modes of knowledge creation. They

propose four modes of knowledge creation (Figure 2).

Scott et al.’s and Gibbons et al.’s Mode 1 is similar, representing the production of scientific or disciplinary knowledge. However, there is a subtle shift in typology. Gibbons et al. treat the site of production as a proxy for the type of knowledge produced. Scott et al.’s typology is derived from the nature of the knowledge. In Section 3.3, I describe this type of knowledge as *know-that*.

Both typologies categorise technical rational knowledge derived from Mode 1 as Mode 2 knowledge, but Scott et al. argues that Gibbons et al.’s Mode 2 requires practitioners to set aside their experiential knowledge because it is “partial, incomplete and subjective” (p. 45), and incorporate into their practice “scientific knowledge that transcends the local and the

particular”. Scott et al. locate this practice-derived experiential knowledge, discarded by Gibbon et al., in Mode 3, where knowledge is subjective and represents the development of individual knowing through reflection (Scott et al., 2004, p. 49). Relating these ideas to the later discussion, Gibbon et al.’s Mode 1 combines *know-that* and *know-how*. Scott et al. separate the *know-that* from the *know-how* and put *know-how* into their Mode 3.

Mode 4 knowledge is critical knowledge. It evaluates the prevailing ethos and purpose of the workplace (Scott et al., 2004, p. 51) through a critical focus on the prevailing institutions and discourse. Mode 4 knowledge acts as a catalyst for change (Scott et al., 2004, p. 51) through the substitution of different values and perspectives. In an assignment where I was managing the transfer of work to an outsource contractor, I thought it important to emphasise the *know-why* so that the supplier had a full picture of its role in the client’s business. As the transaction slipped into the mire, I realized that *care-why* was also an important attribute. I locate *know-why* and *care-why* within Mode 4 and link them to McNiff’s (2013) discussion of *Relational* and *Dialogical* interests.

Both typologies are useful memes that enable dialogue about knowledge, including its categorisation and production, but neither deals with the nature of knowledge, which I discuss in Chapter 3. Scott et al. provide a better correlation to McNiff’s (2013) typology of human interest (Chapter 6), and their work is helpful in distinguishing between the requirements of a Ph.D. and a DBA.

### *1.3. The Context of a Professional Doctorate*

There are two contexts to a professional doctorate: the local context (i.e., the awarding institution) and the wider one (in my case, the ESRC’s (2005) Post Graduate Training Guidelines).

DBA and Ph.D. programmes differ in terms of the level of expertise candidates enter with. DBA and Ph.D. programmes also result in different outcomes. A typical entry requirement for a DBA programme is an MBA or equivalent (Bareham et al., 2000). Relating this requirement to the modes of knowledge previously discussed, a DBA programme candidate at programme entry will be able to demonstrate knowledge relevant to Scott et al.’s (2004) Modes 1, 2, and 3. On the other hand, a Ph.D. student upon entry typically requires a good first or upper second class degree in a relevant subject; when a good degree is not available or

its subject is not relevant, the completion of a conversion Master's degree is called for (Bareham et al., 2000). In each case this represents Mode 1 knowledge, and the outcome of the research will typically contribute to Mode 1.

All DBA programmes have their own specific requirements but share a common goal: the development of research skills as well as personal, business and management knowledge (Bareham et al., 2000). The research training required for a DBA is similar to that required for a Ph.D. (see Appendix 2 to the ESRC's (2005) Post Graduate Training Guidelines). It could be argued that by adopting the 1 + 3 model, where an MRes is completed in the first year followed by a further three years of research culminating in the award of a Ph.D., the ESRC is aligning Ph.Ds. with professional doctorates.

The ESRC's professional doctorate requirements (ESRC, 2005) are not explicitly about the level of subject expertise required for the non-research outcome of a DBA, but analysis of DBA programmes (Bareham et al., 2000) suggests the level of business and management learning required is at least equivalent to that of a Master's degree in the field of study. The difficulty of reconciling a learning outcome that is set at the same level as the entry requirement can be resolved by assuming the need for further study at the Master's level as part of the student's portfolio.

The ESRC (2005) requires DBA candidates to contribute to the development of practice in a professional context. Personal development and the acquisition of knowledge from Modes 1 through 3 (Scott et al., 2004) is emphasised by the ESRC, which requires that the outcome of a professional doctorate contributes to professional practice. That development is demonstrated by the following:

“[T]he requirement for students to produce a reflective statement which demonstrates the contribution made by the whole Ph.D. to their professional learning, or a statement describing the value students gain from any courses students are required to follow in the course of their degree and how these relate to the development of their professional understandings and knowledge”. (ESRC, 2005)

DBA candidates are encouraged to develop applied outcomes (Sarros et al., 2005). This requirement can be distinguished from the requirement for general personal development

identified by Bareham et al. (2000) or from the idea of an original contribution to knowledge, a test critiqued by Ruggeri-Stevens et al. (2001) in the context of DBA assessments. A DBA candidate is not necessarily required to make an original contribution to knowledge (Ruggeri-Stevens et al., 2001).

In summary, a DBA is qualitatively different from a Ph.D., and that difference can most readily be seen in the modes of knowledge that are required on entry and developed during the respective programmes. A DBA embraces an epistemological perspective that moves expertise from the traditional university-led domains of Modes 1 and 2 to the workplace- and individual-dominated domain of Mode 3.

#### *1.4. Reflection*

It is not usual for a research proposal to change following the first supervision meeting. Many, if not all, research proposals are adapted in the early days of supervision and continue to evolve as the work develops. In my case, a consequence of that first meeting was a concern about the nature of the research itself. After a number of false starts, I realised that my DBA would make a contribution to knowledge and to my practice as an interim manager.

As I reflected on the issues, a research design evolved in my mind. I had originally seen my research role as a complete participant (Gold, 1969). That implied covert observation in the style of Holdaway (1982) and Mattley (2006). However, the question that formed in my mind was, who or what is the research subject? If my objective was to validate and to improve my practice, then I would be a focus of the research.

I reasoned that documenting my practice was a step toward my personal development, as the process involved reflexivity as a learning process; see, for example, Dewey (1910) and Kolb and Kolb, (2005). Bolton (2005) argues that reflection is just that, a mirror image of what is in front of you. She uses the term *flexive*, from flexion, to describe a process of alteration, change or modification that ought to be the outcome of reflectivity. In this model, Bolton suggests that “out there” is reflected “in here”—in my head. From in here, I can think about the reflected image and decide my future behaviour. To that end, reflexivity is a process of learning, of understanding what is before me, as well as the development of my ability to change my relationship with that situation.

Very little is known about interim management and the processes adopted by interim managers. I reasoned that my primary case study might stand as a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of interim management and, as such, make an original contribution to the subject. However, to add weight to my point of view and to the veracity of that description, I also looked at how other interim managers approached their work. These thoughts contributed to the research design described in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 6 I discuss the distinct stages of the development of my research design. The nature of the question asked is relevant in determining research practice (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, p. 8). My questions had both an external and an internal focus. What do interim managers do? And how do they do it? The external focus suggested the need for a qualitative approach to data collection, as a quantitative approach requires prior knowledge sufficient to formulate an instrument. My first thought was to focus my approach around grounded theory; see, for example, Glaser and Strauss (1967), Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Charmaz (2006). This approach would have dealt with the literature problem previously discussed and further developed in Chapter 3. During the process of coding, I became aware of how much of me was in the transcripts; they reflected a dialogue between people with similar practices. In the process we co-produced narratives of the experience of interim managers, and it is those narratives, augmented by further narrative production with interim management agents, that are consolidated and presented in Chapter 7.

The second stage of my research involved documenting my own practice in order to develop a phenomenological description of it. To that end, I have produced the case study in Chapter 8. The case represents a longitudinal study that shows my development in a particular aspect of my practice. It was prepared from data in my professional notebooks and is presented as a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of my work as an interim manager. In doing the work described, I engaged in what Alvesson, as cited in Coghlan and Brannick (2005, p. 49), calls self-ethnography, but I present it as autoethnography, or first-person action research. Through a hermeneutic approach, I have endeavoured to interpret my actions in the context of the literature.

That heuristic approach extends to Chapter 9, in which I reflect on the contribution I have made to knowledge and on my DBA experience.

There is a third area of enquiry. The process of thinking about my practice in the context of a DBA has itself been developmental. I show that development in the paper through discussion of the various approaches I have taken in developing my research and understanding.

Ideas of knowledge, knowledge creation and knowledge transfer are emergent themes in interim management, and those themes are continually developed as the paper progresses.

### *1.5. Outline of My Claims*

This project makes three contributions to knowledge. First, it contributes to the body of knowledge of interim management. Second, it provides an opportunity to reflect on my practice as an interim manager directly in the contexts of the practice of other interim managers and the literature. Third, it provides a reflective opportunity that extends beyond the immediate research, enabling me to think through my values and developmental needs.

From the point of view of Scott et al.'s (2004) typology of knowledge, these claims predominantly fall within Modes 2, 3 and 4. Chapter 2 is explicitly positioned as Mode 4 knowledge. It could also be argued that my claims contribute to Mode 2 knowledge, which others treat as propositional. These contributions could result in improvement to my tacit skills and the development of a better understanding of what I do, why I do it (*know-why*) and my values (*care-why*), all of which are building blocks of McNiff's (2013) I-theories as well as examples of Mode 3 and 4 knowledge.

### *1.6. The Structure of the Paper*

This chapter is followed by eight additional chapters. Chapters 2 through 5 provide a discussion of the relevant literature. Chapter 6 describes my methodology and approach. Chapter 7 describes the phenomena of interim management as experienced by practicing interim managers. Chapter 8 is a thick description of my interim management practice as studied over an extended period. And finally, Chapter 9 summarises my claims.

## Chapter 2: Management Education

This is the first of five chapters about the literature. This chapter introduces the literature review and then turns to the substantive issue of management education. The following chapter develops the theoretical perspectives relevant to my research in the context of my worldview. Chapter 4 outlines the role of vision in change management, and Chapter 5 discusses the interim management literature. Chapter 6, the last review chapter, covers methodology.

*Table 2 The Literature Review (O'Leary, 2013)*

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The inductive approach adopted in this paper moves from observation to theory, using theory as a tool to explain observations. The theory also represents influences on my worldview that are reflected in my approach to research. Czarniawska-Joerges (2004) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) see the literature as part of the narrative, but there is a ritual around the formal presentation of research data that places theory before findings. I acknowledge the formal convention by grouping the literature together. To build the relationship between literature and narrative, I share mini case studies that illustrate particular points and later explore the insights from these case studies through discussion of the literature. Chapter 6 has the dual purpose of setting out my methodology and my methodological journey. It is positioned as part of the literature review and as a heuristic enquiry in its own right.

My early drafts defused the theory into the narrative. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 41) adopt this approach in their research and supervision practice. In that way they strive to create a seamless link between theory and narrative. Their aim is to relate the real world to theory; with a traditional approach, the literature review is used to produce a framework to be applied to test a phenomenon (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 41). That narrow purpose is not the only use of a literature review, the developmental and formal roles of which are explained in Table 2.

In setting out a critical appraisal of the current state of management education, this chapter can be related to Scott et al.'s (2004) Mode 4 knowledge (see Figure 1). The chapter reviews



the current state of management education and concludes that management schools tend to impart knowledge that falls into Scott et al.'s (2004) Modes 1 and 2 while neglecting Modes 3 and 4. The resulting deficit is positioned as a potential driver of the growth of interim management.

### *2.1. The Problem with Management Education*

My work in management education is as much a part of my professional profile as my roles in interim and change management are. I first aim to provide a perspective on interim management. Reflecting on why organisations need to employ interim managers, I conclude that interim managers are employed because of a skill shortage amongst middle and senior managers. Skills may be quantitative (e.g., a firm has an insufficient number of managers available to do what needs to be done) or qualitative (e.g., a firm's managers do not have the skills required). The quantitative gap is the stopgap resourcing of Goss and Bridson (1998) discussed in Chapter 3.

In a quantitative survey (Tyrrell, 2006), I tentatively identify a trend in interim management away from bridging gaps in management hierarchy and towards the provision of specialist skills. The data suggests interim managers are not employed in response to pressure to keep head count down (i.e., numeric and financial flexibility) (Legge, 1995), but might be used for qualitative flexibility in work and employment (e.g., see Benner, 2002), or what Atkinson (1984) calls functional flexibility. I conclude there may be evidence of a trend to effectively outsource functional skills to the occupational labour market, as described by Marsden (1999).

This chapter considers the qualitative skills gap by asking, does the modern management workforce have the skills required to deliver organisational change? Justification for narrowing the qualitative skills gap in such a way can be found (1) in the interim management usage data reported in Tyrrell (2006); (2) in Tyrrell (2004a), where the interim managers interviewed were all explicitly engaged in delivering change; and (3) in the interviews reported later in this paper, in which interim managers, ostensibly embedded in organisational hierarchies, claim to be managing organisational change.

Skill implies a particular type of practical knowledge. Section 3.3 describes the problem of knowledge and the processes of knowledge production. This chapter deals with the specific case of management education.

Mintzberg (2004) argues that describing business education as management education propagates a distorted view of the nature of management. The late Sumantra Ghoshal (1948–2004) makes the forceful point that much of what is taught in business schools is bad theory (Ghoshal and Moran, 2005) based on startling assumptions that are “...*both untrue and grotesque*” (p. 3). Pfeffer and Sutton (2006; 2006a) develop a similar theme. In addition, Locke and Spender (2012) offer a damning critique of management science and business school practice.

Many institutions now recognise the need for reflectivity in their MBA programme and are introducing (perhaps reintroducing, as my MBA profile contains a report on a work-based project plus a reflective paper on that project—an option that was withdrawn for a number of years) a compulsory, work-based theory-in-practice course. As they redevelop their course, they are placing reflexivity as a central learning outcome. The question is, does this type of course deliver the objective of ongoing and lasting management development?

Coghlan and Brannick (2005, p. 48) represent internal action research on a continuum that reflects the intended focus of the researcher and the system. Their interest is in action research. In that context they locate most MBA projects in Quadrant 2, where projects are “...*manager-led operational projects within a specific time frame*” (p. 51). Frequently, they are pre-existing projects, often imposed by a superior, which the student-manager is obliged to deliver in any event. Student-managers often try to force-fit action research cycles on a project not established as an action research project. Drawing on both my experience supervising a large number of Quadrant 1 and 2 projects and Coghlan and Brannick’s discussion of Quadrant 2 projects, some concerns arise: the project subordinates need to buy into the change (and may resent being part of an MBA project); the intervention is likely to be aimed at increased productivity or reduced costs; data gathered can be formal or very informal; and the student-manager is likely to have a personal stake (beyond the achievement of the MBA) in its outcome. Coghlan and Brannick additionally suggest the student-manager might want to form a consulting team for the project and that students all receive training in action research. This last point is not true in either of the institutions for which I work, but I encourage the formation of action learning sets, a by-product of my work in this programme.

In those institutions students are permitted to select their own methodology, and many move quite quickly to Quadrant 1 studies. Nonetheless, at one institution the course requires a section of the resulting report to be located in Quadrant 3.

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Figure 2 Coghlan and Brannick's (2005) Typology of Research

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These approaches, although better than nothing, encourage an instrumental approach to study. The student-manager is

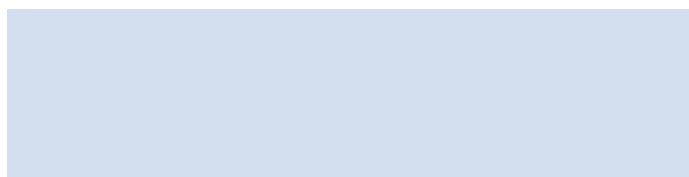
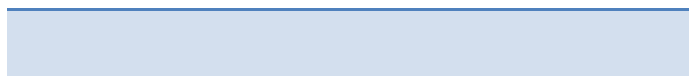
pressured both academically and professionally to deliver the project. Projects are intended to be the application of theory in practice, but many students focus on the project rather than the academic outcome.

I am not arguing against an approach that tries to apply theory in practice. Schön (1995) argues that professional training involves both practice and theory. My point is that the development of practice skills involves more than an obligation to deliver a project with a handful of supervision hours over a relatively short delivery period. For the first two years of my professional life as a lawyer, I sat at the end of my principal's desk, first observing and then doing work under his direct supervision. If, as Mintzberg (2004) argues, management includes the exercise of craft skills, then its development involves supervised experiential learning.

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**Table 3 Rules-Based Learning (Leonard and Swap, 2005)**

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Bennis and O'Toole (2005) argue for the development of practical skills in management. They believe that

business schools are failing because of an institutional failure to recognise the importance of real-world experience in management. They contend that business school stars are those who publish in academic journals rather than the accessible pages of professional reviews, and that the route to successful journal publication is rigorous application of the scientific method (i.e., the pursuit of Mode 1 knowledge). Successful business school faculty achieve academic excellence but are not expected to “...*train practitioners or demonstrate practical uses for their work...*” (Bennis and O’Toole, 2005). They compare business school education unfavourably with schools of law, with which I have some experience, and schools of medicine, which require of their faculty first-class scholarship, the ability to teach and, particularly in the case of medicine, the ability to practice.

Leonard and Swap (2005) assert that business schools prepares students to deal with the type of situations described in Table3 but do not provide guidance on when to depart from the traditional approaches to handling those situations. Conventional business education has little relevance to the types of situations described in Table 4.

Formal management education purports to be Mode 1 knowledge (Gibbons et al., 1994; Scott et al., 2004), although an MBA or other functional-based award might include Mode 2 knowledge, as defined by Gibbons et al. (1994). In either case education is largely rule based (see Table 3) Modes 3 and 4 can only be learned in practice. That tacit dimension is illustrated by the examples in Table 4, but, even more tellingly, Table 5 positions the site for the development of experience-based skills (i.e., tacit workplace skills) in Quadrants C and D, where experiential learning takes place.

### Table 4 Learning by Experience (Leonard and Swap, 2005)

Situations	Examples

Business rules are readily reducible to a course of instruction and provide the bedrock of modern management education, but art and vision—two-thirds of Mintzberg's (2004) management triad of art (or vision), science and craft—are neglected. I believe that Mintzberg used the term *vision* to mean envisioning the possibilities in a situation rather than vision as a form of coercion, as described in Chapter 4.

Mintzberg's (1975) analysis of what managers actually do separates fact from management folklore. Under folklore, he includes the notions that managers are reflective systematic planners, managers have regular duties to perform, senior managers need aggregated information that is best provided by a management information system and that management is a science or profession. For Mintzberg, managers work in a complicated and confusing world (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2003), which they deal with through a series of roles (Mintzberg, 1975), interpersonal activity, information processing and decision making. Mintzberg (1975) argues that the skills required in each of those roles can only be learned through experience.



Mintzberg's thoughts on management have been criticised, and those criticisms are brought together in Nord's (2005) editorial to the special edition of the Academy of Management Learning and Education. The issue includes an article by Barnett (2005), who

makes a powerful case for considering the time gap between graduating with an MBA and attaining a position where leadership skills matter. He also argues that managers need to learn the skills of analysis in any event, but that argument is undermined by Angwin et al. (2009, p. 5) and by Mintzberg's (1975) description of the roles of a manager, as discussed earlier. In the same issue, Jurgensen, in an interview with Roy Lewicki (2005), describes Mintzberg's views as so negative they dilute legitimate observations. Tyson (2005) and Armstrong (2005) suggest that the critique does not apply to UK schools. Finally, Kleinrichert's (2005) critique raises questions about specific cross-disciplinary theories that require consideration: How does theory inform and transcend current pedagogical practices? And how should it be applied to practice? Mintzberg (2005) answers each of these critics, and others, with a spirited defence rooted in his perception of the management mind-sets of reflection, analysis, worldliness, collaboration and action; he questions how these might be developed outside of practical management experience.

The need for practical management experience is central to the business school education problem. Typically, business school education maps only to Quadrant B of Table 5 and leaves the other quadrants to be developed by learning in practice. However, at the same time, modern management structures have reduced opportunities to develop management experience in house. Middle management has been squeezed in pursuit of operational efficiency; for example, see Mini Case Study 2.

**Table 5** The Context of Knowledge (Leonard and Swap, 2005)

Context Specific	Context Free
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	Quadrant A	Quadrant B
<b>Rule-based learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional skills</li> <li>• Professional rules</li> <li>• Personal values</li> <li>• Professional values</li> </ul>
<b>Experience-based learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idiosyncratic knowledge (Williamson, 1985)</li> <li>• Behavioural norms</li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Getting things done around here</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Tacit managerial skills</li> </ul>

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### Mini Case Study 2 *Bureaucracy Has Its Place*

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While visiting a perspective client, I was surprised to find that there was no management layer between the director responsible for an area of operations and his front-line team leaders. This resulted in a very flat, “efficient” structure that had little or no opportunity for management development.

At another client, I found a director with over 20 direct reports, all of whom occupied a highly technical functional role that deployed Quadrant B skills. The role of general manager, freed of direct functional responsibility, to support the divisional director simply ceased to exist.

I attended my first management meeting on my second day and was surprised to see all 20 managers present, each of whom had a report to make to a director. These meetings took place twice a week and lasted at least half a day, but despite this reporting structure the divisional director did not believe himself in full control of the business.

The management team members professed a dislike for bureaucracy, which they suggested would slow business decision making. However, reconfiguring this management structure into a senior management team of five members, to whom an extended management team reported, improved communications and freed up a considerable number of management man hours in which to make decisions. The core management team provided two general managers, one for each area of the business, plus representation from the core support functions of finance, HR and change, the latter a temporary role for the duration of the continuing change programme.

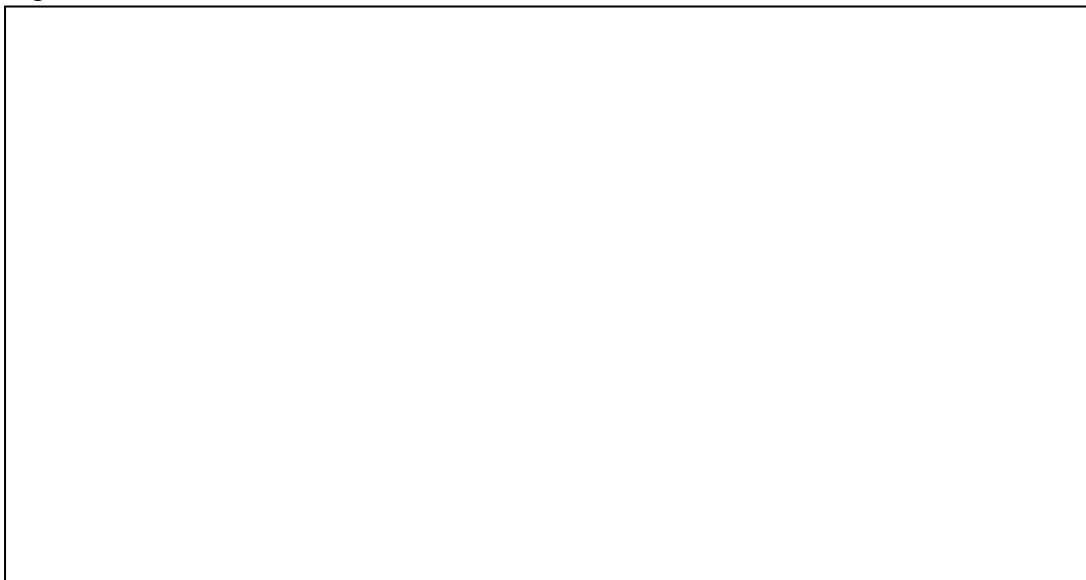
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It is generally accepted that the modern machinery of management enables efficient, flat management structures, but that self-same machinery that enables “...variance analysis, capital budgeting, project management, pay for performance, strategic planning and the like...” (Hamel and Breen, 2007) creates the illusion of control while increasing dependency

on the functional skills of Quadrant B. Both the illusion of control and increased dependency on function skills are relevant to the core proposition of this chapter and require further consideration.

Simons (1995) proposes that organisations have four levers of control (Figure 4). Only one of those levers, the diagnostic control system, operates through the formal machinery of management. That lever compares output with expected results. A second lever, the interactive control system, has a longer-term focus and uses information available to the organisation in order to assist managers in their strategic decision making. The remaining levers are concerned with soft issues.

Figure 4 Simons's (1995) Control Levers



The belief system represents the explicit values of the business. Practising managers recognise the importance of the belief system and its potential both to facilitate and inhibit change. One way in which this is approached is through the development and propagation of corporate vision, which I deal with in Chapter 4.

The boundary system is an explicit statement of what is not allowed to be done in the organisation. Simons's proposition is that managers must effectively operate all four levers if they are to be in control of their organisation.

The control levers suggest that core management skills need to exist in Quadrants C and D of Table 5, which are precisely the areas where I identify a skill shortage in modern management.



The portability of skills, which has been encouraged by the development of modern technology, has led to the development of an extensive occupational labour market (Marsden, 1999). The generic nature of those skills makes acquisition, rather than development, an attractive management option for firms (Boxall and Purcell, 2003) and, conversely, facilitates entry into the occupational labour market, enabling individuals to develop protean, market-based careers. As a consequence, and in the context of any particular firm, the opportunity to develop Quadrant C skills is reduced because senior managers tend to develop their careers in the occupational labour market, predominantly through the utilisation of external career ladders.

The transfer of individual careers from internal to occupational labour market presents a different set of opportunities to managers, as represented by the dyad of protean and boundaryless careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Many US and UK managers have professionalised their career (Kanter, 1997). These careers differ from the “typical” career of the literature, in which career development is a process within organisations (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Tolbert, 1996; Weick, 1996). They have been described as protean careers—careers that “change shape” in response to changing external circumstances (Hall, 1996). Adopting a protean career means finding opportunities for career development outside the traditional model of long-term employment and job security (Gerber et al., 2009). This can happen through building human capital and extra-organisational career ladders (McCade and Savery, 2007).

Boundaryless careers are a step beyond (McCade and Savery, 2007), presenting “...a range of career forms which defy traditional employment assumptions” (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) derived from the occupational labour market (Marsden, 1999) and may very well form a portfolio of roles (Handy, 1994).

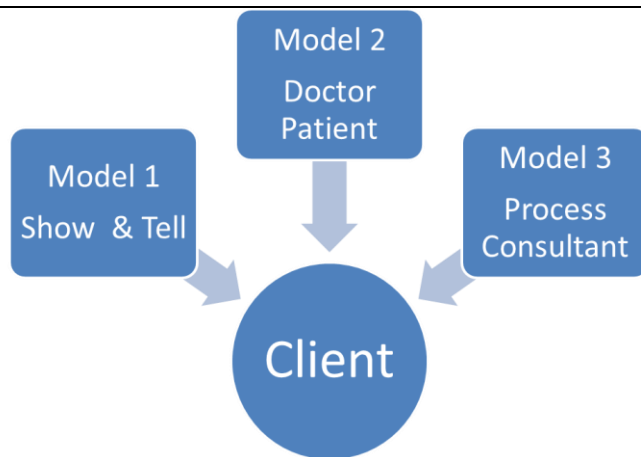
That same trend, coupled with a decrease in the availability of the type of management internship offered by the internal labour market, has created a skills shortage in Quadrant D. I am in good company in advancing that argument, as Mintzberg (2004) takes a similar position, but I go a stage further in arguing that the absence of those skills has encouraged the development of a class of freelance workers—interim managers—who specialise in the deployment of those skills to effect change management.

### 2.2. What Makes Interim Managers Different?

Interim managers are trained and develop within the same institutional context as typical managers, and many have deep functional skills. Why, then, are they different?

An obvious difference is that they move frequently between organisations. In moving, they lose the opportunity to develop deep idiosyncratic skills in the “way things are done around here”, a quadrant C attributes. That loss is partially offset by Spender’s (1989) identification of industry recipes. Further, taking Quadrants C and D as a whole, the daily work of an interim manager provides extensive opportunity to develop those skills. Out of necessity, a successful interim manager generally has extensive capability in the skills of those quadrants, and the interviews carried out for this paper show evidence of that capability.

Figure 5 Consultancy Roles



But those interviews also show something else. Successful interim managers are highly skilled practitioners in their functional domain, but they also need a set of skills beyond that. Interim managers distance themselves from consultants (e.g., see Tyrrell, 2004a and Chapter 7), and clients identify a qualitative difference between interim managers

and consultants (Tyrrell, 2006). Schein’s (1999) classification of client–consultancy relationships encapsulates that difference.

Clients frequently want to know the best way of doing something, and they engage consultants to advise them. The underlying assumption of this kind of Mode 1 engagement is knowledge transfer—but at a conceptual or logical level, where the consultant describes a solution to the problem identified by the manager. The mode does not include diagnostics because the manager’s assessment of the situation is assumed to be right. Implementation is an upselling opportunity for the consultant or an opportunity for interim managers.

Mode 2 is a process of diagnostics in which the consultant is invited to review a business activity and to make recommendations. I have never seen one of these reviews that did not produce a series of recommendations, typically for the implementation of a preformed intervention built around a business improvement method.

Typically, interim managers do not deliver Modes 1 or 2 services at the initial stage but may very well be involved in implementation. Interim managers work in the process of delivering change, but they must do so through the client's workforce. To enable that delivery, they must develop appropriate skills in the workforce, and that usually involves Mode 3 (i.e., process consulting) interventions. They need to build a vision in people's minds (Chapter 4), to develop a plausible roadmap that shows how the vision might be achieved, and to help build individual skills that enable delivery of results. These needs require the Quadrant D skills of leadership and tacitness. I describe these skills as *know-how* in Chapter 3 and argue that this type of skill is derived from experiential learning.

### 2.3. *Summary and Conclusion*

In this chapter I noted a number of potential drivers behind the growth of the interim management market. In keeping with the overall theme of this paper, I considered drivers in relation to the available skillsets within an organisation. I argued that successful managers require tacit skills of the type outlined in Quadrants C and D of Table 5, which can only be developed in practice. Modern business school education does not meet that need, and the more flexible employment arrangements of recent years encourage movement between organisations, further reducing the opportunity to develop the idiosyncratic and context-specific skills required in Quadrants C and D. The same trends that create skill shortages and the demand for interim management feed the supply for interim management.

Finally, I positioned interim managers as having the soft skills of Quadrants C and D of Table 5 and I proposed that interim managers have particular skills in knowledge transfer.

## Chapter 3: Literature Review

### 3.1. Introduction

This is the second literature review chapter. Because of the inductive approach taken in this research, this review reflects my understanding of how “things” fit together as the research progressed. It owes more to Geertz’s (1973) idea of generating understanding than it does to the traditional objective of the accumulation of knowledge. The inclusion of a perspective in this section is justified through the process described in Chapter 6, but that formality does not exclude personal choice. Charmaz (2009, p. 137–145) discusses the role of abductive reasoning in grounded theory, and the idea that the theory selected are the ones which the researcher, note the subjectivity, believes give the most plausible explanation of a phenomena.

That idea can also be found in Alasdair MacIntyre’s claim (as cited in Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, p. 198) that all social life is constructed within social and historical narratives and in John Van Mannen’s encouragement to writers to “*be more reflexive about their narrative practices [sic] and attentive to the influence their narrative choices have on the stories they tell*” (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, p. 198). The literature is part of that narrative choice.

The starting point is the researcher’s perspective and knowledge. Bryman (2008) describes this way of working within a narrative approach. An impression of the relevant literature is provided by the initial review, which is developed through a network effect whereby each contribution to the literature has connections to other contributions. In network theory each contribution is a vertex and the connections are edges.

A “...common property of many large scale networks is that the vertex connectivities follow a scale free distribution” (Ball, 2005). The literature exhibits this characteristic (Barabas and Albert, 1999), and as a result searches are biased towards frequently cited papers.

The vertexes (or contributions) can only be understood in the context of edges (their relationship with other papers). This insight owes much to Latour (2005) and actor network theory (e.g., see Law, 2004; Law and Hassard, 1999; Latour, 1987; Latour and Porter, 1993) as well as the discussion of paradigms in Section 6.3 of Chapter 6. It follows that research is conducted within a garbage can of available literature, constrained by three actants:

- What the researcher knows (perhaps I should also include a supervisor's knowledge to the extent that the supervisor considers that knowledge relevant to the student's proposal)
- The edges within the network of literature
- Discipline-accepted axioms.

The literature dominated my early thinking. The problem is that there is no body of literature called interim manager, and academic literature is organised and indexed thematically. I needed to find topics relevant to my overall research question. I found Jankowicz's (2005) provenance table helpful as a guide to develop my thinking from topic to aspect, from aspect to field, and then to area. The latter two categories link to an area of scholarship and an aspect within that field, and through that linkage provide coherence to the structure of the literature of the academy. In this way relevant literature can be imagined and questions that need to be addressed answered.

Table 6, an early example of a relevance table, shows some of the potential in exploring the issues addressed in this paper in the literature.

Table 6 Sample Provenance Table (Jankowicz, 2005)			
Area	Field	Aspect	Topic
Psychology	Motivational theory	Why do experienced managers become interim managers?	A critical assessment of the motivation of managers in deciding to become interim managers
Organisational development Psychology	Personal worldview Psychological contract Need for acknowledgement? Deep smarts	What expectations do interim managers have from a role?  Are interim managers seeking long-term employment?  Is money or job satisfaction a key driver?	A critical assessment of the expectations of interim managers
HR resourcing Organisational development	The flexible firm Change management Skill shortage	Why do companies use interim managers?	What do interim managers do?

	Deep smarts		
HR resourcing Organisational development	The flexible firm Change management Skill shortage Deep smarts	The use of interim managers within organisations	What do interim managers do?
Organisational development	Change management Deep smarts	How do they (interim managers do it (interim management)?	The practice of interim management

In Chapter 6 I describe how I used data collected from interviews to guide my literature review. The approach owes much to my reading of grounded theory. The resulting abductive process is still not perfect. Penrose's (1995) insight that managers can only do what they can imagine can be done has relevance in the context of research scoping and literature review. The research question itself must be envisioned, and the researcher must imagine—be aware of—the literature that is relevant to the question. Charmaz (2009, p. 138) justifies an abductive approach by referring to constructivist grounded theory's roots in pragmatism and a relativist epistemology. She argues for multiply realities as well as multiple perspectives on those realities. Data, she writes, are not separated from the viewer or the viewed but constructed interactively. That perspective emphasises the need for the researcher to reflect on and make clear the perspective from which the work is taken.

With that view in mind, the literature in this chapter addresses both my worldview and the literature derived from the process I later describe. To bring structure to that second set of literature, I continued to work with Jankowicz's (2005) idea of a provenance table (Table 7).

Table 7 Developed Provenance Table (Jankowicz, 2005)

Area	Fields	Aspect	Topics
HR resourcing Organisational development	Interim management	Interim managers as consultants	The role of an interim manager
		Management temps	
		Functional consultancy	
		Transitional managers	
		The public sector	

Organisational development	The role of management	Interims as general managers	
Economics HR resourcing Organisational development	Occupational labour market	The characteristics of an interim manager	The market
		Flexible firm	
		Skill shortage	
		Working cross-sector	
		skills	
		Magic circle	
The nature of knowledge transfer Organisational development	Change management Stakeholder theory	Storey telling	Working In assignments
		Developmental role	
		Politics	
		Relationships and networks	
		Empathy	

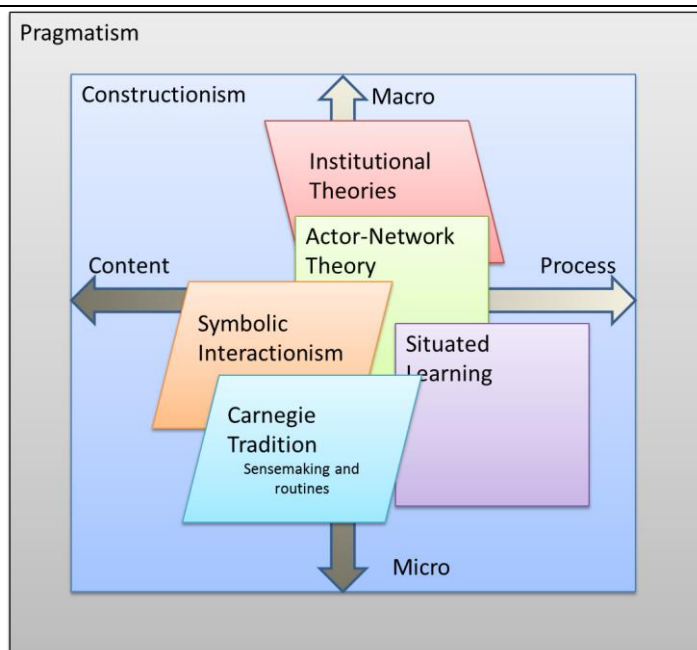
Key influences in the development of my work and worldview include Mintzberg's (1987) *Crafting Strategy*, which speaks to my experience as a practising manager trying for the first time to put together a formal strategy; *Of Strategies Deliberate and Emergent* (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985), which reflects my real-world experience, as does Mintzberg's (1973) description of what managers do; and *The Five Mindsets of a Manager* (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2003). This body of work reflects my real-world experience to a greater extent than most of my MBA studies.

Johnson et al. (2007) has provided an initial framework that I expanded upon to accommodate my theoretical framework. In that framework I link tacit knowledge and communities of practice under the term *situated learning*. This framework draws on pragmatist philosophy (Dewey, 1910; Joas, 1993), which values everyday learning (Elsbach et al., 2005; Lave and Wenger, 1991), sensemaking (Weick et al., 2005) and the organisational routines perspective—which I locate in the resource-based view of the firm (see Teece, 2007 and Grant, 2010), which links with bounded rationality (Simon, 1976) of the Carnegie tradition (Cyert and March, 1963; March and Simon, 1966). A Foucauldian perspective on institutional theory leads to both the consideration of power and the rather more subtle social pressure to conform. Actor network theory positions society as a dynamic,

diachronic and dialectical construct negotiated between the material world of objects and the cognitive world of concepts.

Johnson et al.'s (2007) original framework is helpful but not comprehensive. Constructionism (Section 3.4) plays a critical role in a subjective understanding of the world, and symbolic interactionism offers a powerful explanation of how actors deal with encounters.

Figure 6 Conceptual framework adapted from Johnson et al., 2007 original framework, reproduced with permission.



Pragmatism's three broad guidelines—valuing activity, agency and the practical (Johnson et al., 2007)—bring these ideas together into the coherent approach to theory represented in Figure 6.

Pragmatism is portrayed as an underlying philosophy that supports a constructionist approach to interpretation. The other theories (the traditions) are aligned on two continuous axes: micro to macro and content to process. The horizontal represents a continuum of

thought from what to how<sup>1</sup>. No tradition occupies the centre ground, and, with the exception of institutional theory, each tends towards the micro end of the spectrum of social enquiry.

I combine these ideas in the following discussion on the nature and diffusion of knowledge, which is a core idea in this paper. In Section 3.2 I develop the idea that all knowledge is personal and belongs to a knower. The idea is essential in developing an understanding of knowledge, but it is awkward on two counts. First, empirical observation suggests that it is

<sup>1</sup> The framework is not perfect, and the relationship between symbolic interactionism and the Carnegie tradition may be contentious; both occupy the lower left quadrant, but arguably both have the same degree of concern with the micro.



wrong. Many teams perform better than an assessment of their individual components suggests. Second, pragmatism does not readily accept the duality of person and group (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, Kindle Loc. 164), as people learn in a social context.

The accumulation of group or collective knowledge is the subject of Section 3.3. Section 3.4 describes constructionism, which sheds new light on the topic in the context of the framework illustrated in Figure 6.

### *3.2. Knowledge and Its Production*

In this section I describe the current thinking on the tacit nature of knowledge, and posit that all knowledge is personal. While the argument is important in its contribution to the nature of knowledge, I show in the following sections that it is based on a false premise.

Gibbons et al.'s (1994) and Scott et al.'s (2004) typologies of knowledge are referred to in the introduction. Gibbons et al. classifies knowledge according to the social conditions in which it was created, and Scott et al. according to the type of knowledge intended to be produced. Both are helpful and represent attributes of knowledge, but neither contributes to an understanding of the nature of knowledge.

Figure 7 The SECI Cycle (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995)



Knowledge has been an interest of mine since 1995, when I was asked to join the presentation team of a forthcoming knowledge management course in the Open University's MBA programme. The nature of knowledge is a difficult concept to understand. Early in the course, we stepped around this problem by referring to knowledge as "stuff". At that time, the focus

was on determining how to best make tacit knowledge explicit, and the answer was in Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) SECI cycle (Figure 7). The holy grail of knowledge management was the reification of knowledge so that it could be stored electronically for reuse at will.

The naivety that idea represents is reflected in the German fable of the Nuremberg Funnel (Ray and Carlisle, 2008) and the vision of a teacher pouring knowledge into a pupil's head. In this context, knowledge is a commodity that can be stored and distributed as needed—the explicit knowledge, as described by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). In common with many practitioners at the time, we were beguiled by the possibility of knowledge conversion and overlooked a contemporary paper (Nonaka and Konno, 1998) arguing that once explicit knowledge is separated from “ba”, loosely defined as the context in which the knowledge was produced, it becomes information.

Cooke and Brown (2005) challenge the idea of knowledge conversion by positioning knowledge diffusion in the context of learning (Figure 8). The SECI cycle can be conceptualised in a similar way, and my notes from this period show I considered learning flows within the cycle, including the likelihood of backflows through which those who teach are taught. Tsoukas (2005, first published 2003) critiques Nonaka and Takeuchi's basic proposition, calling it a misunderstanding of Polanyi's (1962) work. Properly understood, tacit and explicit knowledge are inseparable—two sides of the same coin (Tsoukas, 2005)—and always contained in the head of a knower. Taken together, Cooke and Brown (2005) and Tsoukas (2005) have changed the nature of knowledge management. Their work shifted the focus from the naïve idea of reification to the better management of people and from information technology to personal and organisational development.

Figure 8 The Generative Dance (Cooke and Brown, 2005)



Polanyi's (1962) original classification of explicit (*I know what I know*) and tacit (*I know more than I can tell*) knowledge remains valid. He argues that knowledge is always personal; knowing is always in action and is the application of knowledge. A surgeon may know the

procedure for an operation, but his ability to perform the operation is dependent on internalised, tacit, skill. I illustrate this concept in Mini Case Study 3.

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### Mini Case Study 3 *The Apprentice*

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Cooke and Brown's (1999) discussion of knowledge development is illustrated through a case study showing how flute makers transfer their skills in a workshop. It reminded me of having seen a farrier instruct his apprentices. There were three apprentices and three horses. The first apprentice, the most senior and experienced, was given brief instructions and then left largely alone; the farrier responded to his questions when asked. The second was positioned close to where the farrier intended to work and given instructions. From time to time the farrier went over to inspect the apprentice's work and to give advice. The third, new, apprentice was to be taught. And it was this teaching that is both interesting and relevant to this discussion. The third apprentice was asked to file the hooves of a horse. He was shown how to handle the horse, how to secure it, how to get it to raise a foot, and how to hold its foot and the file.

Up to that point, all that had been required was the application of rules. But the filing itself was different. It involved the development of tacit skill. Having demonstrated how the file should be held, the farrier laid his hands on those of the apprentice and drew the file back and forth, his hands guiding both the apprentice's hands and the file. The farrier asked repeatedly, "Can you feel it?" He only released the apprentice's hands, allowing him to continue on his own, when confident that he integrated the knowledge. Even then, he observed and stepped in whenever he detected hesitancy or a slight deficiency in skill, again laying his hands on those of the apprentice, taking control whilst encouraging the development of feeling.

In this way the farrier guided the apprentice in his development of tacit skill, combining the functional, the phenomenal and the semantic (Polanyi, 1962). The functional is the exercise of subsidiary skills—skills that have been previously learned and internalised or, in the case of the third apprentice, were being learned and internalised. The phenomenal refers to the current experience of practice. From the apprentice's perspective, the phenomenal may have a number of facets or stories: the first day of work, the instruction, handling a horse, and developing a relationship with colleagues. All required functional engagement. The semantic is the information gained from those encounters. All are linked by the apprentice as knower.

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To consider the mini case study in terms of *know-that* and *know-how*, (Gilbert Ryle, as cited by Brown and Duguid, 2002), it is helpful to think in terms of rules. Certain rules can be articulated because they are explicit and relatively easily taught. They represent *know-that*. However, further learning is required before that information can be put to use, and that learning can only be acquired through practice (Brown and Duguid, 2002).

Cooke and Brown (2005, p. 60) explain the classification of *know-that* and *know-how* in the following way:

*When we say ‘Miriam has knowledge of physics’ the knowledge is something that Miriam possesses (as concepts, rules, procedures, etc.) ... Further, her knowledge (whether explicit or tacit) is abstract since it is about and not in the tangible world. And it is static, in that possessing it does not require that it is always in use: when Miriam is playing tennis or sleeping she still has knowledge of physics.*

*It might be said that she knows that.*

*Finally, while knowledge itself is static, it is common to see it as necessary in action: ‘Miriam can solve the problem because she has knowledge of physics’ or ‘Miriam cannot solve the problem until she acquires knowledge of the conservation of angular momentum.’ That is knowledge as commonly thought of as something we use in action but it is not understood to be action.”*

(Cooke et al., 2005, p. 60)

Put another way, she *knows how*.

I distinguish between knowledge that Miriam has (i.e., knowledge held by an individual) and knowing (i.e., a process within which that knowledge is used in the deployment of skills and competencies). A metaphor drawn from quantum physics can help elucidate this idea. Each deployment of knowledge in knowing creates new knowledge, either through the affirmation of what is known or through new insights gained from the use. The use is part of a learning cycle that, through a process of constructionism, returns to the knower something different from the knowing deployed in its creation. I use the term *constructionism* following Hall (1997) to represent social constructionism and the constructivist perspective (Section 3.4).

Relating these ideas to Scott et al.’s (2004) typology of knowledge, Miriam’s *know-that* can be located across Mode 1, disciplinary knowledge, and Mode 2, technical rationality. It is knowledge “out there” that can be published in artefacts. It sits in Quadrants A and B of Table 5. However, to accept published artefacts as knowledge is to accept that knowledge can be reified. If that were the case, the Nuremberg Funnel (Ray and Carlisle, 2008) would be a

reality, and I could read and understand Watson and Creeks papers on DNA without bothering to study bio-chemistry and higher mathematics.

What's missing—and why the Nuremberg funnel remains an example of naivety in knowledge management—is *know-how*. Cooke and Brown would say that Miriam has *know-how*, which she uses to apply her *know-that*, but Miriam could not have acquired *know-that* without *know-how*. She needs language, the ability to read and an appropriate level of mathematical skill—all examples of *know-how*—to access the material that enabled her to *know-that*. *Know-that* represents an incremental accumulation of knowing over time and may involve all four of Scott et al.'s (2004) domains of knowledge.

The difference between explicit and tacit knowledge represents a critical aspect of knowledge management. Both are personal in the sense that they are internal to a knower. Explicit knowledge is capable of being externalised, but it then becomes information. This is a more extreme view than that suggested by Nonaka and Konno (1998), who argue that transition takes place when knowledge is taken out of its original context, but is consistent with Polanyi's (1962) original description of knowledge. Information becomes knowledge again when it is absorbed by a knower with the necessary tacitness to understand and use it.

In the case of the farrier and the apprentice, the anatomy of a horse's foot and the need for periodic attention represents *know-that*, whereas the skill to do the work represents *know-how*. However, the case shows a third tacit dimension to knowing that can only be developed through experience: "Can you feel it?" Tacitness is not a unitary concept. Polanyi (1962, p. 55) uses the example of driving a nail with a hammer. Tsoukas's (2005, p. 111–114) example of a dentist using a drill, and my Mini Case Study 3, illustrate this point. Tsoukas describes tacit knowledge as a triangle with its three corners being the subsidiary particulars, the focal point and the knower. The main object of the apprentice's attention should be the horse's hoof. He is aware of the feeling transmitted by the file in his hand (i.e., can you feel it?), but that is a subsidiary awareness. He must learn to rely on that subsidiary feeling without consciously thinking about it if he is going to obtain his teacher's level of skill. Tacit knowledge has three aspects (Tsoukas, p. 112): the functional, the phenomenal and the semantic. The functional relates to the subsidiary awareness and the point of focus. The phenomenal, the ability to translate the subsidiary experience into a new sensory experience, is the meaning of the subsidiary experience in relation to the focus.

In the mini case study, the apprentice is aware of the motion of the file. The face of the file becomes an extension of his senses that enables him to “see” the hoof even though it is below the cutting face. The sensation of drawing the file provides information about not only what he is doing but also the condition of the hoof. He will sense that condition as a new phenomenon. As his experience grows, it will have meaning for him and will cause him to change how he performs his role.

As described up to this point, the tacit nature of knowledge does not exhaust the idea that we know more than we know. What has been described is a form of subconscious knowing in action. When the reflection is a conscious act—reflection in action—the focus point, rather than the output, is the action, and the fluidity required to produce the output is lost. Jazz musicians do not think about how their instrument should be played; they have internalised that technique. Successful golfers focus on the ball and not their swing. I can say from experience that many golfers lose the ability to play well when lessons cause them to become aware of their technique. The lessons shift the focus to technique and away from purpose.

Knowing in action uses *know-how* and, in the way so far described, reflects the spontaneous behaviour of skilled practitioners (Schön, 1983, p. 51). It is the personal knowledge—the “subjective, intuitive way of knowing”—that McNiff (2013, p. 40) links to the idea of I-theories and the latent knowledge in an individual’s mind, an example of Scott et al.’s Mode 3 knowledge.

Reflection in action goes beyond technique. Tsoukas’s dentist, my apprentice and Schön’s jazz musicians have a sensory awareness in action, and they modify their action in response to it. The dentist moves his instrument to gain more information, the apprentice adjusts his approach to his work and the jazz musician extemporises. The process is heuristic and, consciously or not, patterns of action are stored away for future use.

The resulting heuristic rules provide a mental framework within which the practitioner approaches his task. Schön (1983, p. 60) acknowledges the stability this brings to specialist practice but points to the danger of developing a parochial narrowness of vision. Kahneman (2011) identifies the tendency of human beings to assume a current situation is sufficiently similar to a past experience to allow the previous solution to be applied. Kahneman describes two types of thinking: type 1, which predominates and is based on pattern recognition, and type 2, which is cognitive and computational. Type 2 thinking can overrule type 1 but only

engages when a pattern has not been recognised or when forced to do so. Kahneman notes the tendency to assume that new situations fit existing patterns rather than to engage type 2 thinking. These ideas are relevant to Leonard and Swap's (2004, 2005) theory of deep smarts.

The concept of deep smarts, which is explored in Chapter 2, illustrates heuristic thinking. Individuals with deep smarts "exploit their deep knowledge of a particular practice to exercise good judgment and the 'smart' interpretation of new possibilities". Table 8 sets out the characteristics of deep smarts.

Table 8 *Characteristics and limitations of deep smarts (Leonard and Swap, 2004)*

	<b>Task</b>	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Expert</b>	<b>Expert's Limitations</b>
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

Individuals with deep smarts are faced with an opportunity and a challenge. Their expertise makes them valuable in an organisation, but, as Table 9 points out, there is a limitation to their expertise and a tendency toward Kahneman's type 1 thinking. Their work is characterised by the use of tacit knowledge to resolve situations. Leonard et al. (2013) identify the difficulty of deep smarts in explaining what is essentially tacit knowledge and propose a process of observational learning. They suggest that the best way to effect knowledge transfer is through experiential and observational learning. Locating that idea in the context of this paper suggests the generative dance of Cooke and Brown (2005).

The conclusion that all knowledge is personal is inconvenient, as it excludes the possibility of group knowledge. I deal with that in the following section but first need to contextualise the current discussion with the idea in Chapter 2 that management education focuses on technical

rational knowledge. Technical rational knowledge develops patterns of thinking that promote theory over experience. Bennis and O'Toole (2005) imply as much in their unfavourable comparison of business school education with law and medical schools. To extend the discussion in Chapter 2, managerialism represents a faith that the tools and techniques of management science will be sufficient to resolve problems (Locke and Spender, 2012) and that those tools and techniques can be taught outside of a practice setting. The distinction between theory and practice is made clear in the following quotation, which is taken from a discussion of the development of German business education:

*“Drawing a distinction between education that made people capable of doing a job (berufsfähig) and training that made them ready to do a job (berufsfertig), the professors decided to focus on giving students a schooling of the mind (Denkschulung) that enhanced their ability (Fähigkeit) to become berufsfertig. They left the training to firms and nonacademic institutions).”*

(Locke and Spender, 2012, Kindle Loc. 339)

In the context of this discussion, a *Lehre für Führung* provides a preparation for management through the study of various subjects that may be useful to practicing managers in accounting and finance and the like (Lock and Spender, 2012). In Germany professors have developed a *Lehre für Führung* but rejected the idea of providing a *Lehre von Führung* for the study of management itself.

The thesis underpinning the discussion in Chapter 2 and the current discussion is that the practice of management can only be developed in action. Business school education reinforces managerialism as a form of group, or social, knowledge; it creates a belief that graduates are able to run organisations but does not give them the ability to do so.

### 3.3. Group Knowledge

The argument so far has developed four themes. The first is that knowledge cannot be reified; it requires a knower and is part of that knower. The second is that knowledge cannot be transferred but is acquired through action. Knowledge is developed experientially. The third is that the experience of practice reinforces knowledge creation but presents the danger of a parochial narrowness of vision. The final theme is the idea that management skills are developed in action.



It is axiomatic that professionals share a common skill base. The purpose of their training is to ensure they approach practice in a similar way. Spender (1989) shows that industry managers learn a particular recipe, the way things are done in their sector. Schein (2010) identifies culture as the values and behavioural norms that are “*recognised, responded to and maintained by members of the culture*” (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, p. 185) in order to make choices and to take action. Watson (2006, p. 450) defines organisational culture as “[t]he set of meanings and values shared by members of a human group which defines what is good and bad, right and wrong, and consequently defines the appropriate way for members of that group to think and behave”. Culture provides guidance or rules by which individuals manage their relationships and existence (Watson, 2006, p. 81).

Professional training, industry rules and culture are domains of action. It is expected that people with experience in a domain will think and behave in the way that is expected of them. Newcomers will have to learn to do so. Knowing is a matter of displaying competencies defined by the domain (Wenger, 2000, p. 226). To know requires engagement in action; imagination to construct an image of self within the community and of the community; and alignment, a willingness to align one’s own activity with the requirements of the community. Wenger (2000, p. 227–228) describes these activities as modes of belonging. They represent the capacity to make judgements based on an understanding of context, enabling individuals to perform tasks after having been socialised (Berger and Luckman, 1967) into the way in which the tasks should be performed (Tsoukas and Vladimirou, 2001, p. 91).

How to respond within a domain of action is a matter of theory, where theory is action with an anticipated outcome. The choice and application of theory is a consequence of an imagined outcome constrained by the degree of willingness to align activity within the requirements of the community. In that limited sense, choice is a matter of individual judgement.

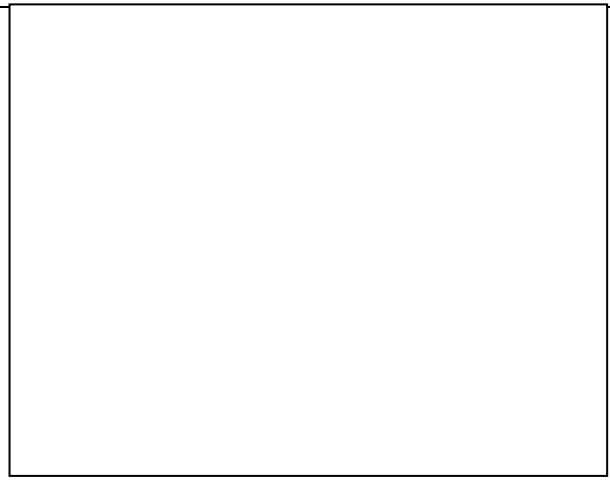
Cooke and Brown (2005) position the idea of acceptable and unacceptable practice as group knowledge. In doing so they do not argue that knowledge can be externalised from a knower. Their position has two dimensions: First, knowledge is commonly held by individuals, although not necessarily all individuals. They use the word common, but commonly is a better way of expressing the idea. Second, implicit within their definition of genre (p. 68) is the idea of domains of action. Genre, according to Cooke and Brown, includes:

*“...not only [...] the distinctive and useful meanings a given group attaches to its various literary artefacts. It also applies to physical and social artefacts—that is to different types of things (technologies or products, for example) and to different types of activities (such as a way of doing a task or types of meeting”.*

(Cooke et al., 2005, p. 68)

This view accords with the wider conception of genre (Freedman and Medway, 1994), which emphasises the rhetorical and socio-cultural dimensions and the centrality of “action” and “play” as opposed to the traditional static emphasis on textual regularity. In an organisational

Figure 9 The Cultural Web (Johnson, Scholes and Whittingham, 2006)



context genre in action involves the ritual of performance, the outcome of which is illustrated in Johnson, Scholes, and Whittingham’s (2006, p. 203) cultural web.

In Cooke and Brown’s (2005) model of knowledge, group-explicit knowledge represents stories about how work is done or about famous successes and failures (p. 67) as well as metaphors and phrases that have a shared meaning. Group-tacit knowledge represents epistemically distinct

work and most closely resembles the meaning and values shared by the group. Cooke and Brown (2005, p. 69) illustrate this concept through a quote from a senior manager: *“The senior staff developed the statement and the group has a sense of what it means, and we use the meaning in our discussion.”*

The pragmatist perspective distinguishes between knowledge and knowing, where knowledge consists of abstract concepts and principles, typified by technical rational knowledge (e.g., see Cooke and Brown, 2005; Schön, 1983), and knowing is derived from action, where knowing something *“refers to an aspect of action, not to something assumed to underlie, enable or be used in action”* (Cooke et al., 2005, p. 61). Cooke and Brown critique the emphasis on action as a category error. They argue, I think wrongly, that *know-that* in most circumstances comes before *know-how*. However, *know-how* is the means by which *know-that* is acquired. Knowledge separated from a knower becomes information; *know-that* is

created by the internalisation of information by a knower. Knowing is acquired through that process. *Know-that* and *know-how* are always acquired in action. In the first case, *know-that* is stored (e.g., Miriam has knowledge of physics), and in the second case, *know-how* is issued (e.g., Miriam can do physics). In this context Cooke and Brown's senior manager has a sense of what the output of a meeting means (*know-that*) and how it can be used (*know-how*).

Throughout this discussion, knowing has been located by individuals and used within groups. Pragmatists recognise the collective accumulation of knowledge but not the duality of person or group (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The acquisition of knowing by an individual is possible because of the socialisation of that individual within a group perspective. This idea makes sense particularly in the context of research; researchers acquire knowledge within a given paradigm (Chapter 6) that has general application. Individuals are located within a cultural matrix in which they live, move and have their being (Dewey, 1938, as cited in Corbin and Strauss, 2008, Kindle Loc. 160). In this construct individuals have an agency relationship with their cultural and professional matrices, or paradigms, and exercising this relationship contributes to what is collectively known. Implicit in this idea is the role of the individual in the wider social group and the assumption that an individual can know only because of what has been received from others in an ever-growing chain of intellectual and moral continuity knowing (Bishop, 2010).

Placing these ideas in the context of the underlying themes of this paper, I introduced managerialism in the previous section. At an institutional level, managerialism can be modelled as a body of knowledge adopted and applied by a social group. A basic tenet of managerialism can be found in the metaphor of the organisation as a machine that can be fined-tuned by managers using their expert technical knowledge (Watson, 2006). Watson (2006) distinguishes between managerialism, the idea that "most social and political problems can be solved through managerial intervention" (p. 222), and managism, which he describes as an operating faith similar to a religious belief. Locke and Spender (2012) imply the same faith in managerialism. Watson (2006) describes managism as a discourse that "...holds there is a distinctive managerial expertise based on a body of expert knowledge which managers should apply to enable them to rationally design, maintain and drive organisational systems in the same way that engineers design, maintain and drive machines" (p. 222). The idea of faith is important. In Watson's view managers draw comfort from their understanding of the formal training in management when faced with conflict or ambiguity.

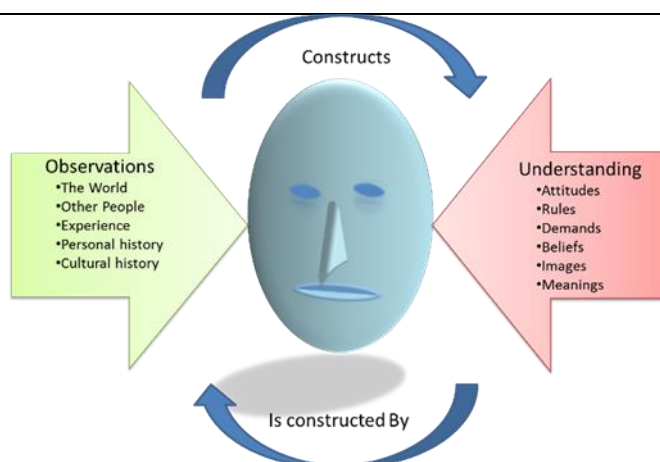
Within this discourse managers are experts who plan, organise, coordinate and control their organisations.

The model of neo-classical economics is treated in a similarly religious way by many practitioners, despite it being possible to demonstrate that the underlying assumptions are either wrong or improbable (Orrell, 2010). The managerial or managist approach is that organisations can be engineered through the mastery of management theory, using the toolset provided through MBA courses and the fads and fables—PDP, TQM, BPR, and the like—that are advocated in the management press.

At the heart of managerialism or managism is the idea that organisations can be reified—that they are in some way different from the individuals and groups that work within them. This idea confers a right on behalf of managers to managers—a marginalisation of experiential learning in favour of technical rational labour, the adoption of the rituals and customs of the faith as represented by management fads, and a tendency to disregard the practical experience of the workforce in favour of current “management” thinking.

Locke and Spender (2012) imply that managerialism lacks a moral compass. If that were the case, it would be unique amongst faiths. Rather, I think it is the case that managerialism embraces the economic morality of Adam Smith (2012).

Figure 10 Modelling Constructionism



I now turn to the construction of the social matrix in which group and individual knowledge is developed and maintained.

### 3.4. Constructionism/Constructivism and Social Constructionism

Figure 10 represents a constructionist perspective (Hall, 1997).

Conceptually, the perspective is

simple; our understanding of the world is constructed in action by our participation within it. It represents a rejection of Cartesian dualism and an acceptance of the idea that “we cannot know anything about or analyse the world without using concepts, language and ‘frames of

reference’, and that these come from the social world that we are part of” (Watson, 2006). This position is consistent with the pragmatist perspective (Section 3.3) and the idea of a cultural matrix.

An ontic description provides facts about the so-called real properties of an object—things that are measurable and observable. A table might be described by its size, its configuration and its material. Social phenomena are more difficult to describe ontically, but location and actors might be good places to start. None of these facts require interpretation by the observer. Lawyers say that facts rarely speak for themselves. A fact that does not speak for itself is not ontic; it must be represented if it is to be heard.

Hall (1997) describes three theories of representation: the reflective approach, the intentional approach and the constructionist approach. The reflective approach is essentialist. It implies that a phenomenon has a true or permanent nature that can be discovered. Meaning is part of the ontic description and inheres without human agency. If meaning is inherent in an object, only awaiting observation, then there is only one meaning. The reflective approach represents category confusion between ontic description and meaning.

The intentional approach assumes that a speaker, the author, addresses a blank canvas that takes on the speaker’s intended meaning. The idea might be illustrated by the Nuremberg funnel (See Section 3.2) and the “*jocular description of a teacher filling a pupil’s head with knowledge*” (Ray and Carlisle, 2008).

Hall’s third theory of representation, the constructionist approach, is concerned with how individuals mentally construct (or imagine) the world around them. Burr (2003) distinguishes between constructivism and social constructionism. From a constructivist perspective the individual is seen as an agent who is in control of the construction process. From a social constructionism perspective, construction is the product of social forces, either structural or interactional (Burr, 2003).

Hall describes the constructivist approach as constructionist, and uses the term *social constructionism* in the rest of the work. There have been attempts to synthesise these concepts (Burr, 2003), and it appears that Hall has attempted to do just that in describing the constructionist approach as having two limbs: the semiotic approach, or constructivism, influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), and the discursive approach, social

constructionism, usually associated with Michel Foucault (1926–1984). That understanding is adopted in this paper.

Burr (2003, p. 2) infers that social constructionism is a term used almost exclusively in psychology, but the concept has strong currency in mainstream sociology. Berger and Luckman's (1967) seminal book *The Social Construction of Reality* draws on work by the Chicago School in symbolic interactionism. They develop a theory of society as a dialectical process between objective and subjective reality through which individuals construct society via social practice but experience it as a fully formed reality to which they must respond.

There is a strong, but incomplete, correlation between that idea and the position of Checkland and Poulter (2006) and Checkland and Scholes (1990). Checkland and his co-authors identify the constraints imposed on individuals by society and the limited opportunity for development, but give voice to the creative value of ideas and concepts as a means of construction.

Burr (2003, p. 182) states that if the model is predominately top down and individuals are the products of the society in which they exist, then discourse cannot be an agent of change and, consequently, individuals are powerless; however, if the model is bottom up, the individual logically comes first and cannot therefore be said to be constructed by society. I do not think Berger and Luckman saw themselves as being trapped in that logical conundrum. Their solution is that individuals construct their world through a three-stage circular process of externalisation, objectification and internalisation. They do not invoke Saussure or acknowledge the semiotic approach, but their three-stage process involves identification of a symbolic system that enables representation—and through representation, meaning and signification—and is close to the process of semiotics and constructivism. For them, individuals have the potential to be change agents and, I infer, use their individual constructs—the dimensions of meaning (Kelly, 1963)—to interpret the events they encounter, to construct their worldview and to influence, or at the least seek to influence, outcomes.

The argument developed has similarities with Giddens's (2001) structuration theory, which examines how social structures are produced, reproduced and transformed through practice. The theory accepts that agents produce structures and are, in turn, influenced by the structures that they inhabit. Locating this theory in the present argument, the freedom of agents to

imagine their operating possibilities and constraints is conditioned by the structures in which they develop as managers and the society in which they locate themselves.

Social constructionism and constructivism can be seen as forces in social tension. In that context, I position social constructionism as a social stabiliser that constrains constructivist activity. I think Berger and Luckman (1967) had something of this in mind in *Social Construction*, in which they clarify Marx's concern with the difference between human activity and the social relationships brought about by such activity. For them, Marx's twin concepts of structure and superstructure are misrepresented by characterising the superstructure as a reflection of the economic substructure. They argue that the substructure is best understood as human activity and superstructure as the outcome of that activity. They go on to clarify the relationship between structure and agent in proposing that although human beings construct the world, they cannot construct it in any way they choose because they are constrained by what has been constructed and by their socialisation into the world.

In a social context the ideas of group norms and standards of behaviour are easily understood. Accepting group norms and standards in a professional context is not difficult. In the previous section I made a case for managerialism as an influencer of norms and standards. In doing so I placed managerialism in an institutional context. Applying this general proposition in an organisational context, individuals engage in action, construct images of themselves within the organisation and of the organisation in general and, at least superficially (see the discussion of vision in Chapter 4), are willing to align their activity with the requirements of the organisation. To that extent, organisational culture is a reflection of activity of the organisational members who are constructed by that activity.

In developing my argument, I have drawn on a number of theories to justify a worldview in which the social superstructure—or in an organisational context, the organisational culture—is both reflective of and constrained by the activities of individuals constructing that superstructure. The role an individual assumes is constructed in a similar way. I deal with roles and enactments in the proceeding section.

### *3.5. Roles and Enactments*

Roles may be performed by individuals or groups. This analysis makes a general point about the function of power in role formation and then addresses individual and group role



formation. These are not discrete ideas, as an individual role may be influenced by the group roles to which the individual is exposed.

Roles are a form of performance (Goffman, 1990) within culturally acceptable norms of behaviour. Parsons (1985) describes the physician and patient roles, and Said (1985) the occidental role. Schön (1983) illustrates a range of professional client relationships derived from the professional's claim to have specialised skills and the client's need to access those skills. The relationships described are relationships of power; to gain access to expertise the client is required to show deference to the expert. Other power relationships include Braverman's (1974) labour process theory, which encapsulates the employment relationship as a relationship of power.

Hall (1997) discusses group formation in the context of power. Drawing on Said's (1985) description of orientalism, Hall argues that the colonialists' construction of the other—the black community—had the effect of constructing the black experience through the eyes of the black community; the community assumed a set of norms and values imposed on it through a hegemonic relationship, although control may be partial and the community constrained rather than compelled (Watson, 2006). The theoretical underpinning of Hall's position can be generalised to organisations, which I imagine as a constellation of communities, and to the individuals within those communities. In this context I include territorial and skill-based communities—the hierarchical or position-based communities described by Schein (2010) as well as Anderson's (2006) imagined communities

The interaction may not be deterministic. Said (1994) writes of the cultural resistance to orientalism. Englander and O'Day's (1995) description of how glove makers concealed their skills from their employers has modern parallels. Whilst preparing a course on life science regulation, I was struck by the number of medical professionals needing to deal with patients who research their own treatment options. Latour (2005) argues that power should be considered based on the effect it has on those in proximity to it and not from the context of the powerful. Dominion is accepted rather than imposed.

Treating power in this way allows for power relationships with inanimate objects—anyone who has worked in the nuclear industry is aware of the power and influence of the nuclear fleet—and with institutions. It offers an explanation for the institutional influences on individuals inherent in a Foucauldian perspective



A role is a way an individual locates self and others in their worldview. Charles Handy (1990) elaborates the Johari window (Luft and Ingham, 1955) into a house with two plains of knowing: me and the other. Room 1 is the part of ourselves that we and others see. Room 2 is that part of me about which I am blind but you can see. Room 3 is my unconscious or subconscious awareness. Room 4 is my private space, the part of me that I keep from others.

Figure 11 The Johari Window (Handy 1990)



The framework suggests a model of relationships and validity. There is tension between Rooms 2 and, 4 which is played out in Room 1. An individual can manage the flow of information from Room 4, restricting it in a casual encounter and allowing it to flow more freely in a close relationship. The presentation in Room 1 is tested within the mental framework you hold, but I

am not a victim of your interpretation. I have some control over the relationship by presenting myself to you in a deliberately chosen role (Goffman, 1997). Nonetheless, my influence on how you see me is limited by plausibility, and I have no way of knowing your view of me in Room 2. That view may very well influence your interaction with me in Room 1 and if it

Figure 12 Individual Domains  
(Morgan 1986, 1998)



were revealed to me, might cause me to modify my role presentation.

Room 3 is me as I know me—a private version of the altogether public Room 1. Having located the “me” in Room 3, the “I” is located in Room 4, my unconscious or subconscious. Rooms 3 and 4 are sites of the construction of identity. Adopting the Habermassian theory of the wider society (Habermas, 1987), both of these Rooms are partially controlled by the public of Room 1. The earlier analysis of constructionism, having regard to the partiality of

control reflected in the theory, suggests this to be right.

These pressures by which individuals construct themselves involve interaction among people. In an organisational context, Morgan (1986, 1998) proposes that an individual functions within three domains of relationship. Figure 12 shows these relationship interests as overlapping, but they may remain discrete. The proposition suggests six domains of relationship in an organisational context in which enactment might take place. Of course, that context is only one of a number of contexts in which an individual dwells (Ramsey, 2005). Individuals have a wide range of roles with which to populate Room 1, and those roles may be interpreted in any of a number of ways by others, and performance may vary between roles. The management guru Ken Blanchard has noted in a public lecture that people who appear to be failing at work may be fulfilled and successful in other activities; they simply may be unable to perform the requirements of the assigned role.

Identity is both related to role and distinct from it. At any moment in time, an individual lives within a number of narratives or identities (e.g., see Ramsey, 2005; Morgan, 1986, 1998). Checkland and Scholes (1990) distinguish between the individual and the role assumed by that individual in particular circumstances. The distinction is between self-identity and social identity (Giddens, 2001). Self-identity refers to the process by which we develop a unique sense of ourselves in relation to our perception of the world and is derived from a process of socialisation that starts in childhood (Watson, 2008). Social identity refers to the characteristics that are attributed to an individual by others (Giddens, 2001).

Roles are adopted in a number of circumstances. In an organisational context, formal roles are taken and given (Krantz and Maltz, 1997). Given roles are created by role influencers, the people who believe it is their responsibility to define the expectations and outcomes of particular jobs (Krantz and Maltz, 1997). In an interim management context, the role influencer is typically the assignment sponsor. The “role as taken” refers to the job holder’s view of what is to be done and how it should be performed.

An organisational role requires the assumption or production of a particular identity in the social context of that organisation’s identity—the understanding of that organisation shared by those who have an interest in it (Watson, 2006).

Goffman (1997) distinguishes between real role enactments, in which the enactment is not consciously put on and contrived, and performances, in which the enactment is prepared for an intended audience. Contrived performance is an important concept. Are the roles put

forward by a job interviewee who is anxious to present himself in the best possible light a real or a contrived enactment? What can be discerned about the instrumental student intent on passing the course at the expense of learning, or the manager focussed on token delivery? Where would you place a consultant's pitch for an assignment? An assumption that a contrived performance is necessarily pejorative may be wide of the mark. Individuals adopt roles that appear to them to be appropriate for the circumstances in which they find themselves. In doing so they strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal identity (Watson, 2008, p. 252) in the context of the social identities in which their lives are lived.

Groups share norms, roles and values with their members (Burnes, 2008). Continued group membership is conditional on behaviour acceptable to the group. The resulting constraint effects individual behaviour and the group's relations with other groups. This idea is central to Lewin's Group Dynamic perspective (as cited in Burnes, 2008) and is represented in the psychosocial sub-system of Miller's Open Systems School (as cited in Burnes, 2008).

In an organisational context, individuals are part of one or more groups. The Open Systems School proposes four organisational subsystems: the organisational goals and values subsystem, the technical subsystem, the psychosocial subsystem and the managerial subsystem (Burnes, 2008). In the context of the current analysis, the technical system is of interest—not in the context of technology, but as a driver of social grouping. Gao and Riley (2010) show a linkage between knowledge and identity, whereby individuals tend to cluster in groups with individuals who have similar knowledge.

Gao and Riley (2010) emphasise the role of knowledge in the creation of identity. They identify the emergence of group identities; members of a group may have specific skills or may be grouped in an organisation because of their knowledge. The participation perspective of learning (Wenger, 1999) stresses the social and relational aspects of learning (Karataş-Özkan and Murphy, 2010) and, in doing so, places the individual at the centre of learning and development within a group or social context. Put more simply, individuals with common sets of skills tend to group together.

In a technical community, this phenomenon can be readily observed. For example, the Oracle team has come together as a single grouping noted for its technical skill in working with Oracle software. For commercial reasons, suppliers encourage this group identity. In contrast,

as an enterprise architect who may wish to change product sets, I actively discourage groups from naming themselves according to a product set. Instead, I encourage them to use a function description: database administrators, finance team, etc. Experience has shown that group identity around a product increases resistance to the substitution of the product. The product becomes the group identity.

The psychosocial sub-system reflects organisational culture through “*the role relationships, values and norms which bind people together*” (Burnes, 2008, p. 326). Within that culture are formal or informal groups, an organisational structure, the management and those who they manage. There may also be imagined communities (Anderson, 2006) derived from a common knowledge base (Gao & Riley, 2010) or common heritage. What these, and other coalescing factors, have in common is a sense of us versus them, where “they” are qualitatively different than “us”.

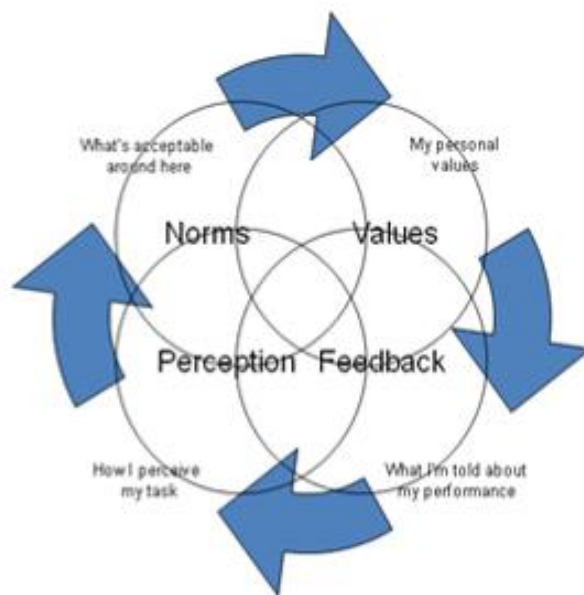
Imagined communities can also be lost communities; the vision of what was can be a powerful influence on what is. The history of a situation is relevant in understanding it (Foucault, 1980, 2002), and how a group is viewed by others is likely to influence its development. Past and present visions developed within the organisation or external to it create identities for actors and promote actions consistent with those identities. The vision of one social group in an organisation might be very different than that of another. The perception varies depending on whether the vision is held or observed, and in considering an organisation, both the discrete visions and the various perceptions must be taken into account.

Schein (2010) identifies three distinct generic groups in organisations: the executive, the designer and operations. These groups have distinct characteristics. I explored this idea in a workshop with a group of MBA strategy students at a residential school. Taking as our starting point Simons’s (1995) control levers, which are intended to balance four interactive control systems; the core values of the business, as evidenced in its belief systems; risk avoidance, as represented by boundary systems; critical performance variables measured by diagnostic control systems; and strategic uncertainties ascertained through interactive control systems, we discussed how these controls might be felt at the individual level. Figure 13 is the outcome of the resulting flip chart discussions, which blended ideas from Campbell and Yeung (2004) and Morgan (1986, 1998) with the underlying ideas of Simons’s control levers. These are the basic building blocks from which Figure 14 has been constructed, which shows the fractal nature of organisations as identified in the workshop.

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Figure 13 Picturing Individuals: The Basic Building Blocks

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The group identified two weaknesses in this horizontal demarcation of groups. First, modern organisations are functionally structured into silos. In a typical organisation, each function is assigned to different groups within the department; for example, an IT department might have management, design and operational functions. Organisations tend to be stratified.

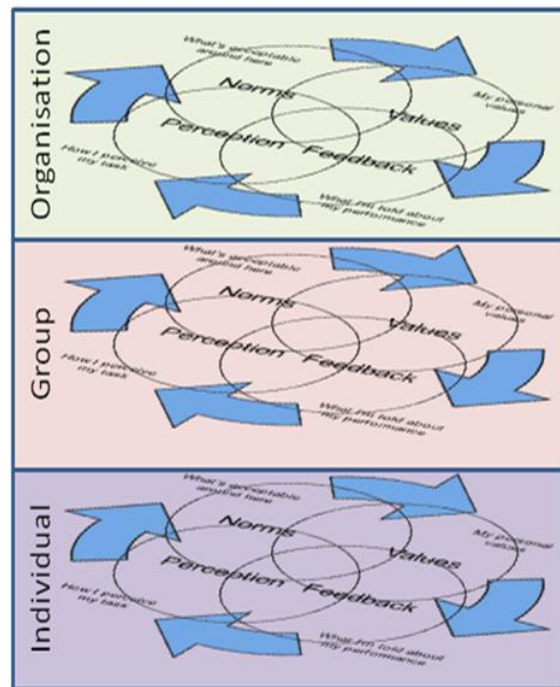
Second, the group identified the role of informal groups within organisations. In doing so, they also identified roles for the informal groups previously recorded by Mayo in the Hawthorn experiment (Burnes, 2008, p. 62–63). The group confirmed one of Mayo’s two major propositions that form the foundation for the Human Relations approach to management; they noted that groups tend to form their own norms, values and attitudes and tend to exert peer pressure on members to conform. Mayo wrote of the deep need individuals have for recognition, security and belonging that is met by membership in informal groups (Burnes, 2008, p. 63). The group confirmed Mayo’s insight (Burnes, 2008, p. 63) that effective managers gain the collaboration and cooperation of informal groups.

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*Figure 14 The Fractal Nature of Organisations*

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- Organisations are collations of social groups
  - Some social groups may have a hegemonic relationship with others
  - The salience of the relationship:
    - between social groups and the organisation
    - between social groups
    - between individuals and organisational social groups; and
    - and other social groups of which the individual is a member
- Are important areas of enquiry



As discussed in Section 3.4, isomorphic training and sharing a common background in functional fields tends to produce group knowledge and thus reduce the potential for misunderstanding. Roles are frequently analytical rather than relational. This is a problem for many senior managers whose route to seniority is by way of functional management. Within functional roles, managers tend to have a strong command of the technical elements of their job (Ibarra and Hunter, 2007). However, if transitioning to a leadership function or managing change across functions, the deployment of relational skills is required.

Mintzberg (1996) critiques the western view of management as a hierarchy. He suggests that a more appropriate model is a circle, with the senior management in the centre linked by middle managers to customer-facing, front-line employees on the circumference. This model depreciates the craze over the last two or three decades to delayer management, as the result is both a loss of knowledge to the organisation and an increase in the level of fear within the organisation (Mintzberg, 1996). To that list, I add a loss of connectivity between the senior management and the front line—the value of which has been demonstrated by Japanese management as well as senior managers needing networks across organisations in order to manage effectively (Ibarra and Hunter, 2007)

Ibarra and Hunter (2007) emphasise the need for leaders to build networks—task-focussed networks, personal networks outside organisations, and strategic networks—if they are to be successful in their role. However, the evidence suggests a level of distrust of subordinates, making internal networking difficult, and a tendency to identify with external occupational groups that will be a key networking resource. Ibarra and Hunter (2007) identify three core networks required by senior management. The first of those networks is to help manage current internal responsibilities. A senior manager is faced with a dilemma, accountability is centralised and flows to the top, but their span and depth of control make it difficult to discharge (Schein, 2010). These forces drive managers to hierarchy, and the top level of that hierarchy becomes the senior manager's internal network. Although bureaucracy has its place, the danger in the constrained network, and the tendency to exercise control through elaborate information systems, is that the senior management can get isolated from the organisation.

Those information systems have grown more sophisticated and enmeshed into business activities, making it more difficult for managers to ignore them in the way Mintzberg (1975) described nearly forty years ago.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) describe how managers avoid the tendency towards bureaucratic isolation through middle-up-down management. Middle managers act as an important link in the organisational structure by bridging senior management's vision with organisational practicality. The role is effective because of the relationships middle managers have with both those they report to and those who report to them. Potential rigidity is avoided. In the Japanese context, the idea *genchi genbutsu* (broadly go and see for yourself) bypasses relationships because it entails direct experience; where there is a problem, senior managers directly engage with it (Takeuchi et al., 2008)

Ibarra and Hunter's (2007) second and third networks are concerned with personal development and strategic insight. Schein (2010) suggests these networks are likely to be external to the company, focusing the managers' view of expertise externally rather than on the resources available to him internally.

Ibarra and Hunter's (2007) thesis is that all three networks contain managers who must reach out to and build relationships with others in the business with whom they must cooperate and collaborate. Their conclusion is that successful managers achieve this. The network becomes



the work environment in which managerial sense-making takes place. In contrast, Schein (2010) has a more constrained view of management networking, with senior managers tending towards a sense-making process that values the external over the internal.

Schein (2010) identifies the executive group as being more likely than not to distrust information coming from subordinates and to treat people as a resource to be managed and acquired. Edwards and Potter (1992) describe this lack of trust and the dilemma of stake. Reports and descriptions are produced by individuals and groups who have interests, desires, ambitions and stakes in some version of what the world is like. In the context of McGregor's (1990) typography of management, the executive group tends towards theory X; they do not fully trust their subordinates and expect them to act with self-interest and guile (Williamson, 1975). Moreover, the executives' occupational identity or base will be outside the organisation; they will socialise and identify with peers with similar functions in other organisations, and that identification will forge group values and norms.

From a change agent's perspective, it is necessary to deal with these relationships. The traditional tools of stakeholder analysis, for example, Winstanley, Sorabji and Dawson's (1995) power matrix, Mitchell, Agle and Wood's (1997) salience model and Johnson, Scholes and Whittingham's (2006) power interest matrix, echo the problems of business school education (Chapter 2). Buchanan and Boddy (1992, p. 27) note that the role of change agent needs to support a public performance of rational and logically phased activity as well as backstage activity of the recruitment and maintenance of support and handling of resistance.

Argyris (1985, 1986) describes that resistance. He outlines the mechanisms adopted in organisations to obstruct organisational learning and development (see Section 8.4). He identifies the paradox of the mechanisms recommended by researchers and adopted by consultants to overcome those routines reinforcing their effectiveness. Change agents adopt an accommodating stance in the name of caring, being realistic or playing it safe, which Argyris says is a poor, if not dangerous, choice. He argues for defence mechanisms to be surfaced and addressed.

I distinguish between organisational defence mechanisms and micro-politics. Micro-politics (e.g., see Watson, 2006, p. 203–207) arise when an individual or group consciously pursues goals that are either not congruent with overall organisational goals or which have an



individual or group purpose independent of organisational goals. Within that definition micro-politics might include personal or group advantage, an honest or narcissistically held belief that an alternative solution is better, or a determination to stop or change a proposal.

Back staging, defence mechanisms and micro-politics are enacted within relationships. Schein's (1999, p. 88–68) seven client roles can be analysed for their substantive role and relationship. Individuals and group have a voice through interpersonal, intergroup and interorganisational (roles) relationships. The seventh, large system group—wrongly, I believe—does not have a relational counterpart. In Schein's work the detail of each of the “inter” relationships differs, but the abstracted concern is the maintenance and development of issues of concern within the relationship.

This section describes the formation, roles and identity of groups in an organisational context. I develop these ideas further in the proceeding section.

### *3.6 Building Effective Relationships*

Management is a particular role within an organisation. Fayol (1949) describes the function of management as planning, organising, coordinating and controlling. Many managers continue to think of their job in those terms (Mintzberg, 1975) despite their daily work being very different. Mintzberg (1975) identifies ten management functions that can be grouped into three sets: an interpersonal role, an informational role and a decision role. The manager's formal authority and status drive the interpersonal role, which drives the other roles.

Mintzberg's (1975) description of management suggests that the skills required to function as a manager include the abilities to develop peer relations, to carry out negotiation, to motivate subordinates, to resolve conflicts, to establish information networks and disseminate information, to make decisions in conditions of ambiguity and to allocate resources. Mintzberg also speaks of the need for managers to be introspective, self-analysing, self-examining and self-observing. He argues that these skills must be learned through experience.

It's wrong to think of management as a homogenous group. There is significant difference between the first-line manager and the chief executive. Historically, the foreman or gang leader may have been a labour supplier who was contracted to do work and hired hands to perform it (Littler, 1982), and that role may have persisted when the role of first-line manager was initially taken into the organisational hierarchy (Watson, 2008, p. 188). Subsequently,

the role was undermined through the intrusion of experts, in production and personal management, so that the first-line manager was neither a worker nor a manager. The status of first-line workers may be improving, as lean production broadens their responsibility from purely supervisory work to accountability for production, but the truncation of the original role and its subsequent expansion reflects a specific view of the role of managers as experts. This idea was first discussed in Section 3.2.

Even though managers speak of running the big machine, they know that a significant element of their work is the continuous assembly of that machine through Mintzberg's (1975) three roles. It is better to think of management as a negotiated order (Strauss, 1963, as cited in Watson, 2006), where the negotiation takes place among individuals and groups within the organisation. .

- Any negotiation has to involve two or more people. Interim management involves work with classes of “stakeholders”, which are not dissimilar to the classes of clients as identified by Schein (1999, p. 65).
- The sponsor, the individual who introduced the interim manager into the situation
- The intermediary who will be involved as the project progresses
- The problem owner, person or group who owns the problem that has prompted the intervention
- The unwitting bystander who will inadvertently get caught up in the process
- The beneficiary who will gain from the intervention
- Others who may have issues and concerns relating to the intervention that ought to be properly considered in the intervention

The requirements of the position are similar to those of an interim manager. A key aspect of interim management is to manage the interests and concerns of each stakeholder. This involves a public performance within the project that follows the rituals and expectations of management or project management and a backstage activity of maintaining the support and cooperation of stakeholders (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992). The interviews of Shelia and Charles (Section 7.9) strike the delicate balance between organisational and project politics rather nicely. The objective is to do what is necessary to get the project completed whilst steering away from involvement in organisational politics.

Intervention typically entails working with individuals or groups—in other words, relationships. Schein (1999, p. 66) describes the nature of typical interventions at each level.

At an individual level, the intervention may involve counselling, coaching, mentoring or training (Schein, 2013), although I have found listening, often following a humble question, to be an effective intervention. Rumelt (2011, p. 257–260) describes this phenomenon in the context of his consulting experience and the story of Frederick Taylor, which is worth retelling:

*“It was 1890, and there was a cocktail party here in Pittsburgh. All the movers and shakers were there, including Carnegie. He held court in a corner of the room, smoking a cigar. He was introduced to Frederick Taylor, the man who was becoming famous as an expert on organizing work. “Young man,” said Carnegie, squinting dubiously at the consultant, “if you can tell me something about management that is worth hearing, I will send you a check for ten thousand dollars.” Now, ten thousand dollars was a great deal of money in 1890. Conversation stopped as the people nearby turned to hear what Taylor would say. “Mr. Carnegie,” Taylor said, “I would advise you to make a list of the ten most important things you can do. And then, start doing number one.” And, the story goes, a week later Taylor received a check for ten thousand dollars.”*

(Rumelt, 2011, p. 258–259)

Rumelt (2011) posits that the value was not in the list, but in the thought that went into the list. The deep, reflective thought involved in producing the list helped Carnegie to concentrate on what was important.

A number of commentators emphasise the importance of dialogue (e.g., see Schein, 1999; Bohm and Nichol, 2004; Bennett, 1998). Bennett may not recognise his work in this context, but his theory of intercultural communication has been used to develop online communities of managers in the early days of knowledge management and when online work was a novelty. That work showed that managers worked together better online if they had first met face to face. The potential for online miscommunication was relative to the amount of time managers had worked together in a face-to-face situation. The project tasked various MBA cohorts to work together remotely on a common project, and we found that Bennett’s (1998)

empathy model suggested helpful protocols, the most enduring of which was the assumption of difference. Using these ideas, we encouraged students to consciously develop a shared language about their project through exchanges like “when you say...do you mean...?”

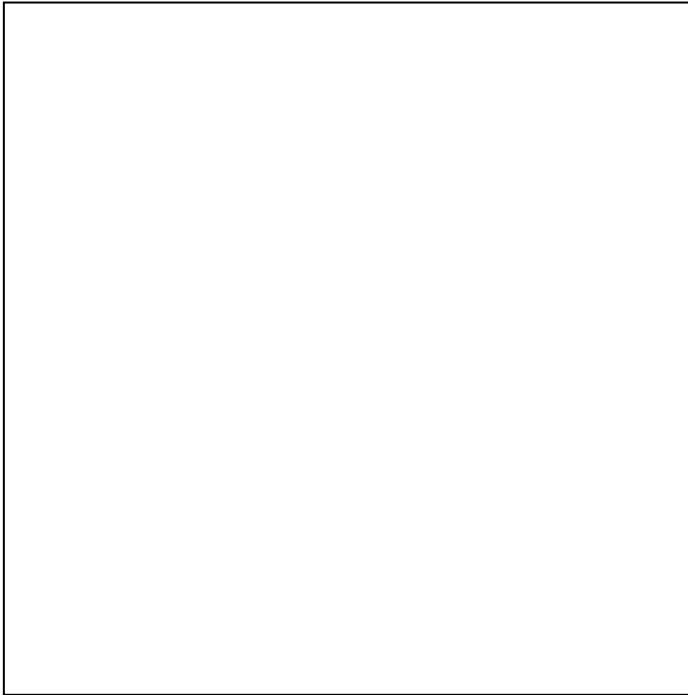
Dialogue is distinct from conversation. Conversations are an everyday occurrence, but dialogue requires effort. Formal dialogue (Bohm and Nichol, 2004) is a group process, the purpose of which is to surface assumptions and values and to develop intragroup understanding of the various perspectives on an issue. Schein (1999) describes a similar process. In my experience informal dialogue arises where there is a shared set of values and assumptions that inform and enrich the discussion. The linguistic marker of this occurrence is when “you” and “me” changes to “us” and “our”.

At an individual level, my work owes much to Hersey and Blanchard’s (1993) work on leadership behaviour (Figure 15). My natural style profile is S2–S3, but I move to S4 when I have confidence in the outcome. Hersey and Blanchard suggest that an S2–S3 profile most readily works with colleagues with a readiness profile in the R2–R3 range. In the context of interim management, that must be right because an R4 competence raises the issue of why the interim has been engaged in the first place.

Working in groups I tend towards an S3, facilitator role. In that environment the role involves providing structure for the group, which may involve such mundane tasks as fixing meetings and agendas and generally supporting the process of the group (Schein, 1999). Schein (1999) observes, and I have found, that it is frequently better to work with group members outside the group so that they are fully able to contribute to group outcomes. The level of intervention is a significant factor that requires consideration. Individual interventions are discussed in Section 3.6 In each case, in order to help in the development of an appropriate approach to the task, it is important to pay attention to relationships between individuals.

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Figure 15 Situational leadership Model (Hersey and Blanchard, 1993)



My thoughts on working at the intergroup level (e.g., see the discussion in Section 8.4 where the groups do not share a common vision) are still evolving. Burnes (2008, p. 346) identified the problem of bridging a macro-level gap at the organisational level with approaches developed for micro-level interventions.

### *3.7 Summary*

In Chapter 2 I described a context for management education that favoured the technical rational over the experiential. It might be said that the chapter presents a slightly lopsided view of management in its underlying assumption that managers step straight from their educational cradle into roles of seniority and responsibility. That is certainly the view of Barnett (2005), who points to the gap between graduation and accession to a senior manager role that permits experiential learning. There is logic to that notion, but the argument must accommodate the delayering of western management. I discussed this in Tyrrell (2004b) and Mini Case Study 2, which illustrates the kind flat management structure commonly found in lean organisations. Barnett's (2005) view can be paraphrased as an argument that middle management is an internship for senior management—or, at the least, is a rite of passage that separates those destined for higher office and the rest.

I argued that knowledge is personal, always requiring a knower, but that it is created in a social context. Individualism is a product of that context, and knowers can only “know” through it. However, I also positioned individuals as joint authors of the social through Berger and Luckman's (1967) cycle. From there I went on to discuss groups and group

identity, and the relationships that senior managers have with their subordinates. I concluded by presenting the leadership style and the processes of intervention that have informed my practice



## Chapter 4: Visions

### 4.1 Introduction

I have worked in a number of organisations where the leadership team has articulated a vision. Visions may be inspirational, but all too often they are aspirational. Managers struggle to distinguish among vision, strategy and business planning (Rumelt, 2011)—although there is a clear difference, as illustrated by Campbell and Yeung’s (2004) mission model (Figure 16).

In this chapter I discuss the role of vision in change management. I include not only the “charismatic” calls for change by senior management teams but also the multiplicity of individual and group visions that exist in any organisation.

### 4.2 The Vision

There is no doubting the power of a charismatic vision to move people, but most management visions are not charismatic. Slogans like the “best of” or the “leading” or the “best known” are derived from the “template school of strategy” (Rumelt, 2011) and are unlikely to

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Figure 16 The Ashridge Mission Model (Campbell and Yeung, 2004) reproduced with permission of Long Range Planning

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motivate the troops to get out of the trenches, particularly where implementation involves downsizing, rightsizing or the imposition of a different working method—and especially when those self-same troops have to work out

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the details of achieving the vision.

### 4.3 The Role of Genre



The process by which visions are constructed can be explained through Cooke and Brown's (2005) idea of a generative dance. Cooke and Brown's framework conveys the idea that knowledge can never be converted from tacit to explicit. They describe the production of organisational tacit knowledge in the context of genre. In this sense genre emphasises the rhetorical and sociocultural dimensions of genre and the centrality of "action" and "play" as opposed to the traditional static emphasis on textual regularity (Freedman and Medway, 1994).

Creating a vision is a sense-making process (Weick, 1995) in which individuals' behaviour and decisions are driven by the sense they make of their environment. Genre provides the framework in which those behaviours and decisions are formed. Outside the genre the vision may not appear rational, but rationality is a subjective marker, is always bounded (Simon, 1976) and is determined by imagination (Penrose, 1995), experience (Kant, 2007), emotion (Sparrow, 2006) or, perhaps, a state of false consciousness. Within the genre the participants construct their vision.

Genres are frameworks for understanding and interpreting organisational knowledge. I have described genre in the context of isomorphic sense-making within a group, but in a general sense genres represent the unstated ways in which we make sense of the world. At a textual level genre suggests that we read a text in the context of its presentation. The text of a biography should be considered inherently different than that of a novel. Perhaps a more obvious example is a newspaper; its structure, the positioning of a story (is it on the front page, the third page, or at the back of the paper?), the proximity of various stories and the use of headlines and by-lines all convey meaning to the reader. Meaning is embedded in the circumstances of the presentation; a handwritten note has a different meaning than a formal notice and conveys a message that is distinct from the words on the page.

Genre is a way of reading organisations. Recently, I attended a meeting at an energy company. The meeting room had just been refurbished, and I noticed that a 1960s ivory telephone with the letters CEEB burned into its case had been placed in the centre of a new, white oak meeting room table. Reading this cultural artefact (Schein, 2010) suggested the innate conservatism that I was later to find in the company.

Genre positioned in action involves the ritual of performance. Staff members read and interpret the senior management team going off site for a number of "strategy meetings". An

unusually high number of off-site meetings suggest change. Going off site is a ritual for the senior managers that suggest serious issues will be discussed. The appointment of an interim manager clearly more qualified than the role demands is an event that will be read. That interim manager's ready access to his or her sponsor is a symbol that employees will read and discuss. The announcement of a new change initiative is itself a ritual that requires a presentation to all staff members, and may be accompanied by the ritual of the off-site hotel.

Genre is important in communicating vision because the vision is formed within genre; the genre is a part of the message of the vision. That vision is presented by its creators within another genre—the circumstances that prevail at and around the point of presentation—and the vision as presented will be interpreted in the context of those circumstances.

Genre involves both constructivist ideas and social constructionism. It represents one of the processes through which group culture is built; group, rather than organisational, culture to distinguish between the different levels of culture (Schein, 2010), and it is within each of those levels that a successful vision must be created, communicated and lived (Blanchard and Stoner, 2004; Blanchard, 2010). It is contained within the theory of social constructionism, as it acts as a reference standard within which social norms are assessed and enacted.

I position genre at several levels within the organisation. In a top-down strategy-making process, senior managers work together within a closely knit group to formulate strategy. Within that group, tacit understandings are developed and understood. My work within iTelco included this type of process; “understandings” were achieved within the strategy group that would be difficult to express in PowerPoint slides or in board reports. The understandings provided the background knowledge against which those documents were developed. The *How* group (Chapter 8) developed a similar view of a world inhabited by a great deal of tacit understanding

#### *4.4 The Vision*

Burning platforms are an output of management away days, where they are developed within the management genre. Typically, strategic workshops persist for two or three days and broadly follow the phases of Moustakas's (1990) heuristic enquiry. A senior manager starts the meeting with a peroration that sets the context for the meeting. The peroration is intended

to promote the cycle of development, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, creative synthesis and validation. The process cultivates understanding of the issues, potential solutions and complexities. The resulting genre (Cooke et al., 2005) is part of the tacit knowledge of the management team

The burning platform is part of management folk law. Management teams speak of creating a burning platform as a means of gaining goal coherence amongst their reports. The sense of urgency of the *n*-step literature (Collins, 1998; e.g., see Kotter, 1996, 2002; Redwood et al., 1999) is typically derived from a managerialist perspective and relates to market conditions and or shareholder interests. It must overcome the two countervailing forces in organisational change identified by Schein (2010), learning anxiety and survival anxiety, and the stabilising influence of the prevailing organisational culture. Learning anxiety is clearly an individual issue. Survival anxiety, on the other hand, is less easy to locate, having both individual and group cultural dimensions.

At PowerCo (Chapter 8) the senior managers used the metaphor of the burning platform to communicate the underlying reason for organisational change. The message was received with almost complete indifference by the staff. Figure 17 (which I discuss later) shows that indifference. Typically, survival anxiety lays with the senior management team whose public commitment to achieving an outcome links their career aspirations to their success

Blanchard and Stoner (2004) define vision as “*knowing who you are, where you’re going and what will guide your journey*”. In a later book, Blanchard (2010) affirms that vision is not enough. For the vision to become a reality, leaders need to ensure the vision is shared in a way that mobilises people. Visions become reality through the application of three rules (Blanchard and Stoner, 2004; Blanchard, 2010), which relate to how the vision is created, communicated and lived.

Clearly, a failure of any one of Blanchard’s (2010) and Blanchard and Stoner’s (2004) rules may cause an organisational vision to fail, but this list of requirements lacks the practicalities of business change. Great ends require more than charisma and visionary leadership. They require careful planning as well as attention to detail, constraints, obstacles and action.

Blanchard and Stoner’s (2004) and Blanchard’s (2010) second stage of vision management is communications. The richness of the genre is difficult to communicate without the intense

dialogue used in its formation. It is also the case that a manager with a managerialist perspective (see the discussion in Section 3.2) may not perceive the need for communications beyond goals, objectives and tasks. In the introduction I introduce the ideas of *know-why* and *care-why*, which I argue are as important as *know-that* and *know*.

#### *4.4 The Other Visions*

For people to follow the vision they must, following Penrose (1995), envision the outcome for themselves. In the process of leadership through vision, individuals must first imagine themselves having the ability to fulfil the vision and second be able to envision what that vision means for them, their group and their organisation. In this sense visions are not followed, but built in the minds of participants through experiential learning.

I describe this process in Chapter 8, both in relation to Netco and the How project. Blanchard (2010) emphasises the need for visions to be shared, and this idea is central to Senge's (1990a) approach to management. It implies that the vision must be shared at all levels; however, that is both untrue and unnecessary (Rumelt, 2011, p. 73). I discuss this idea through analysis of the Ashridge mission model

#### *4.5 The Ashridge Mission Model*

Campbell and Yeung's (2004) Ashridge mission model is about the diffusion of corporate vision. They steer their argument away from the idea of mission as the first step in strategic management and towards the idea that mission is the cultural glue holding an organisation together. It is in this sense that I use their framework in assignments.

In their cultural turn, Campbell and Yeung seem to be moving away from managerialism, where managers instruct and direct towards a more participative form of management, but that impression is illusory. The argument is that compatibility between organisational and personal values is a necessary and desirable goal for organisations. To achieve that end, managers should adopt a common set of values and, having adopted them, "walk the talk". Their actions should evidence their adopted values. These ideas are related to Blanchard and Stoner's (2004) and Blanchard's (2010) second and third stages for turning a vision into a reality: how its communicated and how it is lived.

Any discussion of values and behavioural standards needs to be prefaced by the question, whose values and behavioural standards are being considered? On one level, the values and standards are acquired for the benefit of the stakeholders. Ultimately, though, they need to benefit the organisation. In this sense, the organisation is reified. However, an organisation cannot itself have values or hold benefits, so the values are those of the stakeholders who have salience power—which usually means the values of the senior management team.

Watson (2006) defines management as a function that involves “the overall shaping of relationships, understanding and processes within a work organisation to bring about the completion of the tasks undertaken in the organisation’s name in such a way that the organisation continues into the future”.

Given that perspective, Campbell and Yeung’s (2004) framework is intended to enable strategy and values to resonate with and reinforce each other. Within this framework values are cascaded down through the organisation, representing a perspective grounded in managerialism.

Aside from the conceptual problem of reification of organisations and “organisational values”, there are three further problems with the Ashridge mission model. First, it makes assumptions about individuals that are difficult to sustain. There is a marked “with us or against us” sensibility in Campbell and Yeung’s (2004) article. People who do not share the corporate vision “*may have few strong values and, therefore feel very little for the company.*” (Campbell & Yeung, 2004, p.277) They may not be poor performers or disruptive, but “*their motivation is more self-interest and their attitudes are likely to be more cynical. These individuals may give good service to the company, but there are benefits to the company that only come through individuals with a sense of mission* [presumably consonant with the corporate mission]” (p. 277). This position is overwhelmingly managerialist and does not allow for the plethora of reasons why people work for an organisation (Mini Case Study 4).

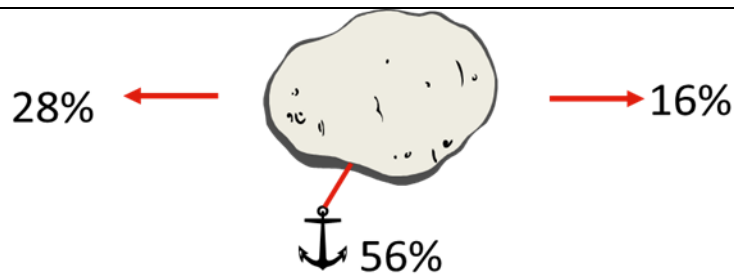
Kelly’s reasons for wanting to work at a particular employer had nothing to do with identification with the employer’s vision. She did her job well because she took pride in her work. She represents hundreds of people I have met as an interim manager; people identify with their work, which they do to the best of their ability, but feel little need to buy into the bigger corporate picture.

Second, Campbell and Yeung (2004) imply that a company can “own” its corporate culture. Schein’s (2010) description of organisational culture is founded on basic assumptions about the world and individual values. Cooke and Brown’s (2005) idea of genre can be applied to the production of culture. In Chapter 3 I show that organisational culture is a reflection of the activity of organisational members, who are constructed by that activity. Culture, in this way of thinking, is “owned” by the workforce, where it acts as a social stabiliser. Individuals tend to adopt the norms and values of their peers, although, and as discussed in Chapter 3, exogenous forces may play a part in shaping those norms and values.

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Figure 17 The Rock: Staff Attitudes Towards the Process of Change

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Management’s power to compel change is limited.

Figure 17 is taken from a senior management presentation and shows the prevailing attitude toward a change programme, which, at the point the survey was

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conducted, had been running for about eighteen months. The rock is symbolic; it represents the idea that management had been dragging along the dead weight of the workforce. I joined this programme at about the time the survey had been conducted, and, to me, it spoke volumes of a them-and-us attitude involving the senior managers, their extended management team and the rest of the office-bound, and professional, workforce.

The figures are interesting: sixteen percent of the workforce actively supported the change programme, fifty-six percent were passively ignoring it, and twenty-eight percent were actively resisting it through the deployment of the kind of organisational defence routines noted by Argyris (1986) (see Section 8.3). Kafkaesque situations are by no means unusual in change management.

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#### Mini Case Study 4 *We Need More People Like Kelly*

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Kelly was pointed out to me as an exemplar of the kind of employee the firm wanted. “We want

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more people like her.”

Kelly was a risk analyst who regularly was at her desk before eight and would work very late if the task at hand demanded it. Her work was excellent, and she had an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward the people she worked with.

I thought it might be interesting to know what motivated her to work at the firm, so I asked her. “I like it here, as Mum’s just around the corner, and I can pop in and see her at lunchtime.”

Kelly’s work was exemplary, but she didn’t feel the need to give her soul to the firm.

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*When I was a junior, I would have volunteered to do the photocopying,” he said “if it meant that I came to the attention of senior management.”*

The survey had different effects across the senior management team. Most saw it as cause for despair. Many acted in the way that Schein (2010) predicts, voicing increased distrust regarding the staff’s level of motivation. I decided to find out more, and my interviews with Kelly and her colleagues are the result. I was able to reach out to them because of the uniqueness of my position, having access to the senior management team but not being part of that team.

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#### *Mini Case Study 5 I’ll Do Whatever It Takes*

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Although the presentation had gone on for an hour, the message was quite simple. If we produce less in quarter 3, we will make more money. At the end of the presentation, the director responsible for production said his reputation was built on maximising production. He had the capacity to do so in that quarter. He had publicly committed to what he would produce, and that’s what he was going to do.

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meet their own objectives (Watson, 2006) (see Mini Case Study 6); they try to meet these objectives even if their achievement is not in the overall corporate interest. There is a body of opinion that managers satisfice within their roles (Watson, 2006).

The management team did not see the Kelly’s in the fifty-six percent. Instead, they grafted their values onto the group and complained that those values were not universally accepted. A finance manager was publicly called disloyal to the company when he chose to go on holiday with his family rather than attend a management workshop. A director questioned why young managers were not volunteering for extra, unpaid work when bids were being prepared. “*When I*

My third critique of the Ashridge Mission Model relates to the assumption that homogeneous visions exist within organisations. A key issue raised in the PowerCo case study in Chapter 8 is the different visions held by organisational divisions and the conflicts between them. Managers compete micro-politically for resources so that they can

Within a managerialist perspective, satisficing is seen as a pejorative term, but why should that be? Managers who are satisficing are doing what is expected of them. Compared with those in academia, they are working at a 2.2 level; their work is satisfactory, which suggests a medium level of performance.

All these managers are doing what the organisation requires of them, and those requirements inform their vision of what needs to be done. The metaphor of an organisation as a gas cloud comes to mind (Mini Case Study 7). Large organisations are complex and difficult to control centrally.

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#### Mini Case Study 6 *Fire Your Best Project Managers*

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“Fire both of them...”

This was not the advice the operations director expected to receive, but it caught his attention. I had been engaged by a software house to improve the way it delivered its projects. After being introduced to the two “best” project managers at the beginning of an assignment, I was told that if I could understand and replicate across the project management community what those individuals regularly achieve, then project delivery would be satisfactory.

“...or radically redesign their contribution to project delivery.”

I had his attention. Project managers are incentivised to deliver on time. The two “best” project managers had long service and close, long-term relationships with the development teams. They were able to use those relationships to pull resources from other projects to ensure their projects were delivered on time. Because they were successful, they were asked to deliver a bigger project work load. What had been a minor nuisance to other project managers now meant that few other projects were delivered on time. There were a number of available solutions that might work, but intervention in the development area was problematic. It was run by one of the founders of the firm. The obvious answer was to “promote” the “best” project managers to programme management/resource allocation roles overseeing the other projects.

Which we did.

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The managers in Mini Case Study 5 and 6 were doing what they were employed to do to the best of their abilities. What they did not have, or what they declined to adopt, was the overall system view that the late Professor John Stopford (in a private meeting) described as an essential component of successful management.



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### Mini Case Study 7 *Organisations as a Gas Cloud*

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I introduced Lewin's (1951) unfreeze, change and refreeze process at an MBA tutorial. Anna said she hated the model. According to her, organisations were not frozen but in a constant state of disarray. She thought a better metaphor for an organisation was a gas cloud full of energised molecules flying randomly in different directions.

The resulting discussion ranged from Mintzberg's theory of management, within which management is reactive to events (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985), to Mintzberg's (1976, 1994) idea that the need to make a myriad of minor decisions leads to inconsistency over time, and this lack of consistency opens the door to organisational defensive routines (Argyris, 1986) and to the problems identified by Hayek (2001) in the process of centralised planning.

In this context we saw as a group validity in Lewin's process at the individual and group levels (i.e. Lewin's original context), but we struggled to see its applicability at the organisational/transformational level.

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In any organisation there are a variety of communities, each of which has its own values and behavioural standards (Section 3.6). In PowerCo (Chapter 8), there were clear differences between the group board, IMD and the trading management team, and those differences covered strategy, values and behaviour. Employees were aware of those differences and used them as organisational defence mechanisms (Argyris, 1986) to slow trading's management initiatives.

The Ashridge mission model treats vision as a corporate mechanism, something around which organisational participants coalesce. But vision has a personal context, and at any one time an individual lives within a number of visions (Ramsey, 2005). Vision is something we all do—something that informs and drives our lives. Personal vision has something of the elements of the Ashridge model, but at a personal level, perhaps with endowments—an old word used by economists instead of strategy—resulting in a model overlaid, as might be suggested by Ramsey (2005), by self-images driven by different life domains.

To these constructs of organisation and self, I add a third observation. Organisations are constellations of social groups that give individuals a feeling of belonging—Anderson's (2006) imagined communities that co-exist with one another within the boundaries of an organisation and sometimes span that boundary.

Reflecting on these ideas, I found an imperfect link with Logan et al.'s (2008) idea of tribal leadership. It is imperfect in the sense that Logan et al. take an overly simplistic work

domain-based view of individuals, to which they apply a managerialist approach informed by their interpretation of the behaviour and values of those individuals. Their expressed concern is to build great organisations; great individuals are a by-product of that concern. That seems to me to be wrong headed—and something that the individuals concerned will identify and may very well resent. I take from Logan et al. some thoughts about typology and most of all a raft of hints about the development of people. A great place to work, de facto a great organisation, is one in which people are encouraged to develop their full potential. That is the objective of the *How* project (Chapter 8)

It is in this context that I position McNiff and Whitehead's (2000, p. 10–12) discussion of vision. The constrained vision is one in which the best is made of an existing situation. Unconstrained visions see “*social realities [as being] constructed by people and therefore open to deconstruction and development*” (McNiff and Whitehead, 2000, p. 11).

Good managers work within constrained vision every day of their working lives. The process is evolutionary. Unconstrained vision is the stuff of transitional change, but all too often an unconstrained vision is not the vision of those who will be affected by it. It is a burning platform imposed upon them. The vision must be accommodated by acceptance or by mediation through the existing personal and social group worldviews. The vision becomes a target that must be pursued through a process of implementation, with the risk that it could be dissipated by its encounter with the other visions it encounters as it is brought to life.

#### 4.6 Summary

Vision remains a compelling idea in the minds of senior managers. Many of my recent assignments have involved attempts to realign organisations with a vision defined by senior management and to adopt the values that enable that vision. The implementation of a vision involves intervention at the individual, group and, sometimes, intergroup levels (Chapter 8). The propagation of a vision requires dialogue at each of those levels—work which is ideally suited to interim managers



## Chapter 5: The Interim Management Literature

Goss and Bridson (1998) propose a hypothesis that interim management can be modelled through three broad organisational stereotypes: the flexible firm, the learning organisation and the networked firm. On the supply side, two of their three categories suggest that interim work is an imposition rather than a choice. Their argument (their paper is an argument for further research rather than a report on research findings) is that even managers with a high level of functional specialisation hope to gain a “better employment opportunity”, either now or in the medium term (p. 39). In their view, only interim managers with transitional skills commit to a long-term interim management career.

In the introduction to this paper, I showed the relatively small size of the interim management market. The best estimates place the market at around 3,000 working interims (Sambrook, 2000; BEI/CBI, n.d.; Russam, 2005; Russell, 1998). A problem for researchers in this area is that there is no definition of interim management or interim managers. In Tyrrell (2006), and following consultation with interim management agencies, I made an assumption that the minimum rate for an interim manager is £600 per day, which represents an entry-level average contract income of around £120,000 per year. Many interim managers earn significantly more than this. Using minimum rates in this way separates interim managers from most categories of atypical contract labour.

Goss and Bridson’s supply side has two categories: route to another job and best present option. From a demand perspective, these options represent time contracting or “stopgap” resourcing, terms which are not applied consistently in practice (Goss and Bridson, 1998) and can be applied to almost any approach to temporary recruitment. Ford and Slater’s (2005) typology of agency workers offers a demand-side analysis with five categories. The first four categories include (1) the flexible firm (Atkinson and Meager, 1986, 1986a), (2) the replacement of workers on leave, (3) the provision of cover whilst recruiting (Houseman et al., 2003) and (4) the probationary contracts to “try out” potential permanent recruits. The fifth category is the use of agency staff for short-term, ad hoc tasks “without a permanent analogue”. These work options can be grouped, in a management context, as management temping, job seeking or functional contracting.

There is no single database of freelance workers (Kitching and Smallbone, 2008), which makes it difficult to estimate the size of the market (Ganson, 2002). Kitching and

Smallbone's (2008) broad estimate of the total size of the freelance workforce is three and a quarter million workers. Narrowing that to exclude all workers who are not within standard occupation categories—(1) managers and senior officials, (2) professional occupations and (3) associated professional and technical (together SOC1-3)—leaves about one million four hundred thousand freelance workers. There is no present evidence of this group's commitment to a career in the contract market, but the idea that the majority of SOC1-3 self-employed workers are occupational conscripts is not sustainable without further research.

The first four of Forde and Slater's (2005) categories of agency worker may have an analogue in Goss and Bridson's typology, where the gap is, in a management context, a gap in line management. Goss and Bridson say that in these roles the work-seeker is fulfilling an established vacancy or "*keeping a seat warm for an absent employee*" and that the work-seeker is expected to do no more than maintain the status quo. Goss and Bridson describe this kind of resourcing as instrumental. I take this to mean doing what is necessary to fill a gap in the line and having the required skill set to maintain the status quo.

The market data (Table 1) shows that around a quarter of appointments may be characterised as gap filling. It is by no means certain that gap filling is "mere" management temping. The interviews reported in Chapter 7 provide examples of stop-gap assignments, but crucially, the interim managers were not employed simply to keep a seat warm, but to change the line function to which the seat was attached for the better. Stopgap may also mean bridging a skills gap in the organisation. The Ford and Slater typology accommodates this kind of role in the category work without a permanent analogue. Goss and Bridson narrowly define this as functional resourcing, as it involves a level of applied consultancy to perform a task.

There is an overlap between technical (typically IT) contractors and interim managers. The majority of organisations in which I have worked use IT contractors who deliver with and through permanent staff. Some might also contribute applied consultancy in the sense that they have discretion over how but not what is done. They are technical specialists but not necessarily interim managers. The status of an interim manager is a role presentation of the type discussed in Chapter 3. Whether certain individuals are interim managers is a question of their perception of their role and the perceptions of peers, interim management agents and their clients in an organisational context.

A way of recognising interim managers and interim manager roles is to determine whether they are thought of as such by their employing company. This is not just a matter of contract but of discourse and practice. The Christmas party test is helpful in this regard. In a number of organisations in which I have worked managers engaged instrumentally and interim managers are routinely invited to social functions, such as the office Christmas party, but functional contractors are not. This slightly odd social role appears to point to a status being derived from the level of integration into the firm. Instrumentally resourced managers are embedded in the line and, despite their lack of tenure, appear to be considered part of the workforce. Interim managers are either embedded in the senior or extended management team and might be thought of partly as a host of the social event. Or they may be embedded in the line but have an additional change function to perform and a networked relationship with the senior or extended management team.

Goss and Bridson's idea that interim managers are generally seeking a permanent job, or are working as interims because it's the best present option, was rejected by the agents interviewed. The agents said they look for a commitment to interim work in all candidates. If an interim manager accepts a permanent assignment elsewhere, it is bad for the agent's reputation. One agent was particularly scathing about temp-to-permanent opportunities, saying "*that's entirely missing the point of an assignment*". Another reports that fewer than five percent of his assignments have led to a permanent role and that in all cases, the appointment was "*at a level of responsibility [...] greater than the original assignment*", which suggests that, as reported by the interim managers interviewed for this paper (Chapter 7), interims are typically utilised in roles at a level or levels below their ability. In other words, they are overqualified for their roles.

The interim providers trade association, the Interim Management Association (IMA), makes the same point in saying that "*Interim Management is a career choice, not something to do whilst searching for a permanent job*" (IMA, 2010).

The commercial benefit to client companies of using interims was a recurrent theme in the agent interviews. A principal stressed the importance of being able to demonstrate the need for an appointment in a business case: "*the financial benefits should be obvious and are not associated with daily rates*". The implication is that the engagement should be thought of and treated as a commercial rather than a human-resource contract.

If further evidence is needed that interim management is not a route to a job or the best present option, it can be found in what the industry refers to as the magi circle. The representative of one well-known agency spoke of a bank of 5,000 candidates, around 200 of whom work on a regular basis. Agents, it was said, will use only those interims who they believe will give a satisfactory service to clients. Directors of two other agencies confirmed this view. Each agency had a large number of individuals on their books, a sub-set of which they call for interview, and an even smaller group who were well known to staff of the agency and are regularly put forward for assignments. As one put it, *“We know there might be good people out there, but we tend to work with the people we know, people who have done a good job for us in the past”*. These views confirm the impression of a relatively small industry and suggest that the interim management market will not be a particularly helpful way for a job seeker to proceed.

Mallon (1998) provides a typology of contract workers. Her notion of push and pull divides the self-employed market into four groups. Refugees are people pushed to self-employment through labour market forces and who see their role as a temporary condition before re-joining the employed market. Trade-offs are those who frequently adopt self-employment to accommodate aspects of their lifestyle. I know a highly qualified IT project manager who balances contract commitments with long-distance, extended sailing holidays. Converts are people who finding themselves in self-employment for a variety of reasons and find the life convivial. Missionaries have a positive orientation towards entrepreneurial work.

Mahon’s research cohort tended towards refugee status, which might suggest support for Goss and Bridson’s thesis. However, the difficulty of accepting that 1.5 million SOC1-3 highly skilled workers are refugees waiting for something better to turn up must be faced.

None of the interim managers interviewed for this paper, or in Tyrrell (2004a), indicated a desire to return to the employment market, and the interim management agents interviewed (Chapter 7) are firm in their requirement that a commitment to interim management is a key characteristic of an interim manager.

It might be expected that refugee interim managers will seek contract extensions in an attempt to avoid a return to the market, and each of the interim managers interviewed for this paper and for Tyrrell (2004) had contracts extended at various times, but each claimed that an assignment has a natural end date. A very senior manager once told me, “You are a useful

bloke to have around, and you could stay as long as you like”. This suggested to me that the time had come to move on. The managers interviewed (Chapter 7) believed their effectiveness came from their temporal engagement with their clients, and they were at pains to separate what they did from management temping.

In Tyrrell (2004) I show that interim managers had a low regard for what they described as “high-level management temps”, but the interview cohort for that paper largely included interim managers working as programme or project managers, and so they might be expected to have an orientation towards change. The exception, an HR specialist, was engaged in change work and so might be thought to have a project orientation. The interim managers interviewed for this paper mainly held line responsibility, which suggests that they should be categorised as management temps. However, they self-describe their role in the context of change management. These descriptions are developed in Chapter 7.

Identification with a role in organisational development and change points to a key attribute of interim managers in their contribution to transitional management. Goss and Bridson (1998) limit this role to a sophisticated level of interim management that meets a transitional stopgap through the provision of transformational leadership, but the interview respondents were clear that it represents the *raison d'être* of interim management. According to this view, Goss and Bridson’s other categories of supply-side interim management—simple (or job seeker) and formal (or best present option)—are merely forms of time-limited contracting.

Goss and Bridson’s interpretation of interim management implies moving the concept of interim management from the rarefied atmosphere of the interim executive—a term not recognised by the respondents reported in Tyrrell (2006). The reality of interim management, as discussed in this paper, is that successful transitional leadership must be applied at multiple levels throughout the organisation—an idea that has resonance with the concept of the learning organisation (Senge, 1990b, 1990a).

Goss and Bridson’s approach to understanding the market is to classify the interim manager’s intention on the supply side and the purpose of the engagement on the demand side. Taking the evidence presented in this paper, the supplier-side categories collapse into a single category of sophisticated contracting. However, I have previously reported (Tyrrell, 2004b) the tension in the literature between those who report that contractors have a negative view of their contract work and those who report the work positively. Given that tension, the Goss



and Bridson framework may have general application in the wider atypical employment market, but not have relevance in the relatively well-remunerated interim management market. In the context of the evidence shown in this paper as well as the comments of the interim managers interviewed for Tyrrell (2004), it is difficult to reconcile the interim market as a market of refugees (Mallon, 1998) or of managers waiting for something better to turn to (Goss and Bridson, 1998).

An alternative way of developing a view of the interim market is by understanding the skills required of an interim manager. The typical characteristics leading interim management agencies look for in potential interim managers are set out in Figure 18. These characteristics have been taken from promotional material issued by a leading interim management agency, BIE (n.d.). Those characteristics are comparable with the desirable characteristics of an interim manager published by the IIMA (IIMA, n.d.), as shown in Figure 19. As described by a number of agents, these characteristics portray an individual who will:

- Hit the ground running
- Be able to quickly summarise a situation
- Drawing on his or her extensive experience to make recommendations for action and deliver results

That description suggests the capabilities required by Goss and Bridson's (1998) transitional managers and is far removed from the concept of either their simple or formal interim management categories.

Figure 18 The Characteristics of an Interim Manager (BIE, n.d.)

Attributes	Experience

The description of interim management work in Chapter 7 suggests that in the context of the interim management market, the Goss and Bridson typology does not give an adequate description of interim management work. The literature is inconclusive and represents an area for further research. That research is beyond the scope of this paper but might have an agenda that includes the transfer of career management to individuals and the generic nature of

modern functional skills; each of these, I suggest, encourages the development of a market for management skills located within the occupational labour market, as described by Marsden (2003). Within that category, further analysis is required. This could involve testing the typology proposed in Tyrrell (2004b), which suggests that the level of discretion in how work is carried out is a material consideration, or validating the characteristics of an interim manager (Figures 18 and 19) but also drawing from this paper the idea that interim managers are predominantly engaged in transitional work.

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Figure 19 Will You Make a Good Interim Manager? (IIMA, n.d.)

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## Chapter 6: Methodology: Method and Ethics

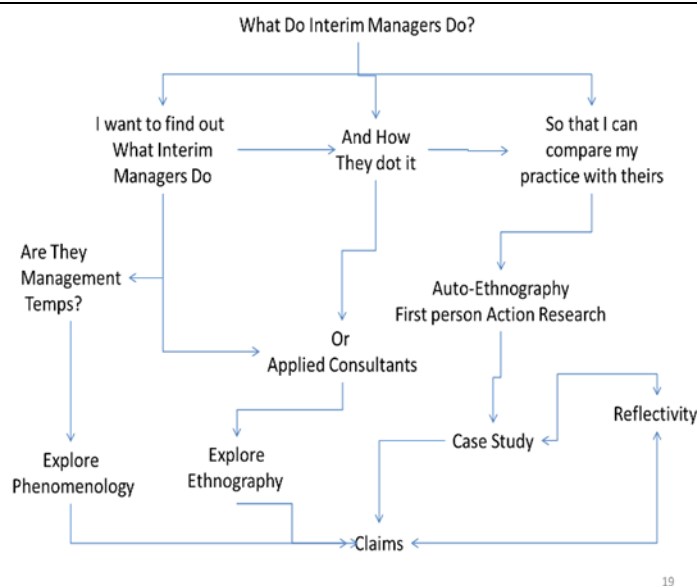
## 6.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the scope of my enquiry, my methodological journey and the methodology design that emerged from that journey. It outlines the methods used for collecting and analysing the data, and addresses issues of validation and ethics.

My objectives, which are outlined in Chapter 1, can be summarised as a desire to understand, validate and develop my professional practice as an interim manager. To comply with the ESRC's (2005) research training requirements, and to better understand what being an interim manager means, I carried out a qualitative enquiry into how interim managers view and understand interim management (Tyrrell, 2004a) as well as a quantitative enquiry into employers' understanding of interim management (Tyrrell, 2006). Both papers improved my understanding of the interim management market (Tyrrell, 2004a) and provided some insights into the practice of interim managers.

In this chapter I describe my approach to an enquiry into how interim managers change organisations, which provides a baseline that I use in considering my practice as an interim manager. Figure 20 maps this part of my research.

Figure 20 Research Mapping



The structure of the chapter is as follows: First, I describe the core paradigmatic positions. Next I consider the idea of objectivity, which leads naturally to a section on pragmatism in a research context. From the general, I then turn to the specific of my research. The research has two stands: The first deals with the methodology and method used in establishing a baseline of interim management practice. This section also

describes the process through which I have identified the literature relevant to the study. The

case study and the literature each provide a set of ideas or themes that are used together to develop an understanding of interim management practice. Ethical issues are discussed in the Section 6.7.

## 6.2. Typologies of Research

McNiff (2013) defines a paradigm as “*a set of ideas and approaches, mental models that influence the development of particular intellectual and social frameworks*”. 6 and Bellamy (2012) write that the paradigm state of a particular tradition represents “*what is required by its peculiar tradition to be included in any satisfactory explanation of an event, temporary state of affairs, trend, regulatory or tradition*”. They describe a scientific paradigm as something developed and maintained by “*an identified group of scientists*” (p. 32), which they and other scientists work within.

In summary, a paradigm represents a worldview underpinning the theories and methodology of a particular discipline or scientific subject (O’Leary, 2013). That worldview is developed from assumptions about the world. In describing the influences on my work in Chapter 3, I also develop a description of my worldview and explicitly locate myself in the interpretivist tradition, which is one of a number of paradigmatic frameworks outlined in the chapter.

The ESRC (2005) post-graduate guidelines require candidates to be trained in quantitative and qualitative research methods. In prevailing thinking, the requirement reflects a need for research training in positivist and interpretative research, which represent two major research paradigms. This section outlines each of those perspectives and compares their core assumptions. It represents the core paradigms as a continuum (Table 9).

Table 9 The Positivism–Interpretivism Continuum (Morgan and Smircich, 1980, *as cited in Collis and Hussey, 2014*) reproduced with the permission of the Academy of Management

Positivism						Interpretivism
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six
Ontological Assumptions	Reality as a concrete structure	Reality as a concrete process	Reality as a contextual field of information	Reality as a realm of symbolic discourse	Reality as a social construction	Reality as a project of human imagination

<b>Epistemological Stance</b>	To construct a positivist science	To construct systems, process, changes	To map contexts	To understand patterns of symbolic discourse	To understand how social reality is created	To obtain phenomenological insight; revelation
<b>Research Method</b>	Experiments, surveys	Historical analysis	Interpretive contextual analysis	Symbolic analysis	Hermeneutics	Exploration of pure subjectivity

The left-most column of Table 9 sets out a positivist perspective, which has a core assumption of the social world being the same as the physical world (Collis and Hussey, 2014). The resulting objectivist assumption (Table 10) is a form of empiricism (6 and Bellamy, 2012), and in the modern form, implies *“that all theoretical knowledge should be capable of being reduced to statements about empirical knowledge and the patterns found within them”* (6 and Bellamy, 2012).

Following Popper (2012), the quest for objective knowledge, untainted by the “researcher’s own values and situatedness” (McNiff, 2013), can be considered an exercise in naive empiricism. The critique is of objectivity rather than the ideas of replicability and generalisability, both of which are important tests of validation in scientific work. Scientific advances have been of enormous benefit to the human condition, but the very idea of advances suggests that what was known before has been depreciated. In this context an outcome may be repeatable, and be capable of generalisation, but it is objective only within the scientific paradigm in which it was forged.

As the continuum moves to the right, the “certainty” of positivism gives way to the interpretive paradigm. The second column represents the world as we make it, the third a world derived from information, the fourth a construct of relationships and meaning and the fifth world as a personal construct. The discussion in Section 3.6 is relevant to this idea. The sixth, and most extreme, column describes a world that exists only in the mind of an

individual. That extreme may seem to owe more to the dystopia described in the Matrix franchise<sup>2</sup> but has practical relevance in understanding, for example, Anderson's (2006) concept of imagined communities, which has particular importance in change management. The idea also has relevance in a narrative approach to research, in which the objective is to externalise the lived experience of the interviewee.

A commitment to a paradigm implies a number of assumptions, as illustrated in Table 10.

The different assumptions applicable to each paradigm mask the similarities between them. Both approaches require a research question to drive the process and the application of a method for data collection, summary and analysis. Practitioners in each tradition will discuss the results of their findings and will draw conclusions from them consistent with their particular paradigmatic belief. In each case the process is contained within a methodological framework (discussed later), which provides the research strategy and grounding for the study (O'Leary, 2013)

Table 10 *Paradigmatic Assumptions (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 47) reproduced with the permission of Palgrave Macmillans. This material must not be copied or reproduced without the permission of Palgrave Macmillans*

<b>Philosophical Assumptions</b>	<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Interpretivism</b>
<b>Ontological assumptions (the nature of reality)</b>	Social reality is objective and external to the researcher.	Social reality is subjective and socially constructed.
<b>Epistemological assumptions (what constitutes valid knowledge)</b>	There is only one reality. Knowledge comes from objective evidence about observable and measurable phenomena. The researcher is distinct from phenomena under study.	There are multiple realities. Knowledge comes from subjective evidence from participants. The researcher interacts with phenomena under study.

<sup>2</sup> *The Matrix* (1999), *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003) and *The Matrix Revolution* (2003), directed by the Wachowskis and distributed by Warner Brothers.

<b>Axiological assumptions (the role of values)</b>	The researcher is independent from the phenomena under study.	The researcher acknowledges that the research is subjective.
	The results are unbiased and value free.	The findings are biased and value laden.
<b>Rhetorical assumptions (the language of research)</b>	The researcher uses the passive voice, accepted quantitative words and set definitions.	The researcher uses the personal voice, accepted qualitative terms and limited a priori definitions.
<b>Methodological assumptions</b>	The researcher takes a deductive approach.	The researcher takes an inductive approach.
	The researcher studies cause and effect, and uses a static design where categories are identified in advance.	The researcher studies the topic within its context and uses an emerging design where categories are identified during the process.
	Generalisations lead to prediction, explanation and understanding.	Patterns and/or theories are developed for understanding.
	Results are accurate and reliable through validity and reliability.	Findings are accurate and reliable through verification.

Positivism is a form of empiricism. Empiricism is a philosophical position whose central tenets are the following:

- “Knowledge comes from experience, or from what can be observed, either directly or through the use of instruments,
- “In the process of developing abstract concepts and theories, the researcher identifies patterns that recur in the data, where the recurring patterns represent the explanation provided in the data.”

(6 and Bellamy, 2012)

This broad view positions empiricism as having relevance across much of the research continuum. Sociology has always had a positivist stream, but Mills (2000), for example,



critiques an approach as amounting to “*abstracted empiricism*”, where data is collected and analysed, often using statistical techniques, within the positivist tradition to establish “*objective, empirically derived truths*”. The outcome is a positivist ontological stance that positions reality as an objective certainty.

In contrast, the ontological position of interpretivists assumes subjectivity: “each person has his or her own sense of reality, and there are multiple realities” (Collis and Hussey, 2014).

In Chapter 3, I described knowing as a subjective property of a knower, which both constructs and is constructed in a social context. Consistent with that position, I now show that all knowledge is an interpretation of empirical observations. I do so through a critique of objectivity.

### 6.3. Objectivity

The discussion in Chapter 3 is relevant to this chapter. Latour (1987) demonstrates the social construction of scientific knowledge through the metaphor of a “black box”. In doing so, he describes the interaction between constructivism and social constructionism outlined in Section 3.5. The black box is constructed as a result of the interaction of the researcher and the scientific literature, the activities of laboratories and the institutional context of science within which so-called objective knowledge is generated. The objectivity of the knowledge produced is relative to the paradigm in which it is produced. The paradigm describes what is acceptable as knowledge and how it is to be produced and verified. Knowledge produced outside the paradigm does not comply with the paradigmatic rules of knowledge and is rejected.

Latour explores the wider ramifications of these ideas, but for current purposes, the key point is that scientific theory is relative to its context. Scientific theory is relevant to and helpful in addressing certain problems, but it cannot be said to be a definitive view. Views may change if the evidence is interpreted from a different perspective and/or as subject knowledge develops. By placing research in the social and technical context in which it was undertaken, Latour questions whether successful science is true science. Does it describe an underlying reality, or is it a paradigmatic interpretation of that reality?

Latour’s work points to issues of confidence in the physical sciences by positioning the resolution of scientific issues in a relative relationship to best current thinking. Fleck’s

(1935–1979) social constructionist idea of the “thought collective of scientists” (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010) leads to similar conclusions. This perspective is consistent with a Newtonian approach to science and with Karl Popper’s (1992–1994) idea of the black swan. Popper proposes that the scientific method should be based on a falsification of theory, through which scientists seek to disprove theories. Moreover, Popper (2012) argues that “all scientific descriptions of facts are highly selective, that they always depend upon theories”.

Linking these ideas to the previous section, natural scientific theories are narratives developed in the positivist tradition constructed and presented as an unbiased way of deriving objective fact, where that construction has followed a methodology accepted by the scientific community. Even within the scientific method, they do not represent certainties because their “truth” is related to the prevailing paradigm in which they were formed.

Despite that uncertainty, the physical science community has over several centuries developed powerful frameworks that enable explanations and predictions that have an air of certainty and that have enabled us to “do better” (Watson, 2006). In contrast, Merton (2012) argues that social science is relatively young. Sociology’s grand theory is not the result of centuries of empirical experimentation, but is derived from the philosophical writing of, for example, Auguste Comte (1794–1859), Karl Marx (1818–1883), Max Weber (1864–1920), Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) and Emily Durkheim (1858–1917), each of whom was concerned with describing a total system for society. Merton argues that putting the philosophical cart before the experiential horse results in theories that give very little guidance to the practical business of research.

For over a hundred years, sociology has explored both quantitative and qualitative research. In the late 1950s, Mills (2000) wrote critically of both grand theory and abstract empiricism, the practises of social research dominated by statistics and technique. Neither encouraged a critical awareness of social life—Mills’s “*sociological imagination*”. His contemporary, Merton (2012), describes these theories as middle range, having practical application somewhere between the “*minor but necessary, working hypotheses that evolve...during day to day research*”, and grand theory.

Middle-range theories operate in limited social domains and are created largely through empirical research to explain observed regularities in social behaviour (Bryman, 2008). Examples include the traditions referred to in Chapter 3, which have been used to build the

emergent theory of interim management outlined in Chapter 9. Middle-range theory is contextualised within the domain in which it was formulated, but further research may enable it to be generalised to other domains. It provides one explanation of social action, although not the only explanation. It is also a product of the research narrative in which it was formulated (see above) and needs to be understood in that context.

Empirical or naive realism—the idea that there is a perfect “out there” that can be described objectively through the analysis of the data (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010)—removes the researcher from the context of research. The researcher’s worldview is the context in which theory is formulated as a narrative act influenced by the interests of the researcher. McNiff (2013) outlines the critical theory perspective and recognises the influence on research of the “historical, cultural and social situatedness of researchers”. I make a similar point in Chapter 3.

That situatedness is reflected in the researcher–subject relationship. In traditional empirical research, the researcher, as expert, interprets and presents the data in the context of its own situatedness. In doing so, researchers assume a power relationship with the subject through which they assume the right to speak on the subject’s behalf. Anthropologists speak of the “*crisis of representation*” (e.g., see Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). Geertz (1973) relocates the discussion to organisational theory by recognising the power relationships within organisations and how employees make sense of their organisations and their life within them. This social-interpretivist perspective indicates a need to consider multiple interpretations of a phenomenon, the role of context in shaping those interpretations, and the experience of situations and events. According to this way of thinking, the research acts as an empathetic reporter of the lived experience of the subject rather than an interpreter of observed events.

These ideas suggest that there are a range of objective perspectives. That must be so if objectivity is context specific. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write of a narrative researcher stepping in and out of an objective viewpoint. They link Schön’s (1983) idea of the possibility of both leading a life and reflecting on it with a duality of objectivity, of action in life and reflection on that action, and of the difference in reflective outcomes that arise where action and reflection occur closely together or are separated by a lengthy period, perhaps years.

Social context is also important. Any non-subjective assessment of objectivity is by peer review. Just as research is assessed in the context of the paradigm that informed it, so a manager's objectivity is assessed by the norms and values of the social groups or institutional context in which he functions. There is an analogue with ideas of truth and validity in narrative research. Narratives reflect the subject's willingness to place her thoughts into the public space of Luff and Ingham's (1955) Room 1. They represent a subjective construction of events, where the subjectivity is informed by institutional context (Section 3.5).

Nevertheless, the account is treated as truthful, even if shown to be factually incorrect (Elliott, 2005). At the first level of analysis, the data is what the subject believes can be said within the prevailing social norms. At the second level, comparison with other data, including other narratives, provides insight into, for example, values and norms. Applying this approach to objectivity shows that assessment can be within intersubjective meaning or against an external normative standard. Either assessment provides insight.

I argue that the objectivity of any science, physical or social, is questionable, as objectivity is constrained by paradigm—the compulsion to falsify, the maturity of the science applied and the situatedness of the researcher. In considering maturity, it should not be thought that objectivity comes with age. The lesson of the physical sciences is that over time more and more useful insights arise that can benefit mankind. The goal of middle-range theory (Merton, 2012) is a similar outcome through the accumulation of knowledge of the social.

In the next section, I adopt a pragmatist stance to these issues.

#### *6.4. Pragmatism*

As evidenced by the previous discussion, a situation may have many interpretations. To leave it there, however, would not advance the discussion beyond the position of the critical theorists cited earlier who note what is wrong but not what can be done about it (McNiff, 2013). Such an overview does not suffice in a paper intended to deal with theory in practice. Applying theory requires selecting among theories as well as discerning the relative value of “one piece of analysis or knowledge compared with another” (Watson, 2006)—in other words, it involves an epistemological judgement.

In the previous section, I set aside the notion of truth. But if a statement cannot be said to be true, how can we know that it is worth knowing? Pragmatism uses the idea of truth in a very

specific way. Pragmatism reflects a belief that we cannot be certain that successful science is true science—that it describes the underlying realities. This idea is referenced in the earlier discussion of objectivity.

There is a distinction between the everyday usage of the word *pragmatic* and its use in a philosophical sense. Pragmatic, as in expedient or convenient, is different than philosophical pragmatism (Watson, 2006). Nor is it necessary that a pragmatist need be a relativist: “the historical founders of pragmatist thought were by no means all relativists [...and...] there are important contemporary philosophers of science who call themselves pragmatists but who argue fiercely against relativism” (6 and Bellamy, 2012). Pragmatism recognises that information is never value free—that absolute truths or final laws are improbable—but that some things may, in particular circumstances, be truer than others (Watson, 2006).

To return to the question posed in the opening paragraph of this section, Watson suggests knowledge should be judged by how effective it is when applied in practice. To judge effectiveness, the only certainty is the evidence of success in particular applications and the ability to generate additional questions (6 and Bellamy, 2012). Pragmatism is a problem-solving activity, the success of which is judged by its ability to eliminate puzzles currently faced by scientists (6 and Bellamy, 2012).

In Chapter 3 pragmatist thought was introduced in the context of knowledge. I positioned the individual in a social context and set out Berger and Luckman’s (1967) interpretation of Marx’s concept of sub- and superstructures, where the substructure is human activity and the superstructure is the outcome of that activity. Socialisation within the superstructure constrains and enables an actor’s worldview and actions. In this concept identity is an interactional accomplishment (Glynn, 2008): collectives are social artefacts created and recreated by way of dominant cultural scripts and the effect power has on those in proximity to it (Latour, 1986).

Social interactionism brings to this construct the idea that actors interpret and define one another’s actions. A response is not made directly to action but is based on the meaning attached to that action (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The idea that knowledge is created through action and interaction in the way described—that knowledge arises through “*acting and interacting*” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008)—is deeply rooted in pragmatist thought (Corbin and

Strauss, 2008). Pragmatism's epistemological uncertainty requires reflexivity by researchers and practitioners:

*"[P]roperly speaking, knowledge arises through (note the verbs) acting and interacting of self-reflective beings. Typically the activity is precipitated by a problematic situation, where one can't just act automatically or habitually. According to Dewey (1929), "All reflective inquiry starts from a problematic situation, and no such situation can be settled in its own terms" (p. 189). And Mead (1938) states, "Reflective thinking arises in testing the means which are presented for carrying out some hypothetical way of continuing an action which has been checked" (p. 79). The issue before the actor is the resolution of a problem. Its answer is uncertain, and judgment of it can be made only in terms of further action (consequences) directed by the provisional answer. According to Dewey (1929), "The test of ideas, of thinking generally, is found in the consequences of the acts to which the ideas lead, that is in the new arrangement of things which are brought into existence."*

(Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 136)

These ideas have important implications for research design. A researcher working in the pragmatic tradition is freed of an ideological commitment to any particular methodological assumption but can work within the framework that yields the greatest insight to the research.

### *6.5 Action Research and Learning: Ontology and Epistemology*

It is a natural progression to move from the consideration of pragmatism to action research and action inquiry. Each is concerned with the practical deployment of ideas in action.

Torbert's (2004) description of action inquiry has three levels: (1) practice within yourself, (2) practice in a group or organisational context and (3) inquiry into society and human living in general. Similarly, Reason and Bradbury (2008) suggest that action research accounts may be seen as first, second or third person action research:

- *"First-person action research occurs when an individual practitioner reflects on his personal practice and offers an account of what he is doing and thinking."*
- *"Second-person action research is when people enquire with others about how they*

*can address issues of mutual concern.* •

*“Third-person action research aims to connect individual researchers with wider communities, whether face to face or virtually at a distance.”*

(Reason and Bradbury, 2008)

Action research consists of a family of approaches (Reason and Bradbury, 2008), each of holds specific ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. I deal with the methodological assumptions in Section 6.5.5. Here, I deal with the issues of ontology and epistemology.

The ontological commitment in action research can be expressed “in the language of values, communicating ideas about truth, social justice, compassionate ways of living and respect for diverse and seemingly alien forms of life” (McNiff, 2013, p. 28). Those values extend over the three domains of research identified by Reason and Bradbury (2008) and include commitments to fairness, equality, and cooperative enquiry as well as an ability to suspend preconceptions in order to see an issue holistically from all points of view, a desire to build a better society—and the courage to speak out to do so—and honesty in dealing with others and oneself. Avoiding self-deception implies a commitment to heuristic enquiry (Moustakas, 1990) and reflectivity (e.g., see Bolton, 2005; Schön, 1983, 1995).

In reality these commitments are aspirational, and individuals may lapse from time to time. I recall a 360 feedback form that said once my confidence in an individual was lost, it was difficult for them to regain it. I discussed the comment with a colleague who asked how I felt about it. I was unhappy that anyone should have that perception of me, as it did not reflect my personal values. But my colleague’s question was not the right one to ask. My unhappiness was narcissistic; it was about how I felt. The correct enquiry was into my relationship with the person who made the comment and the appropriateness of my behaviour in that relationship.

There are limitations on the extent to which an enquiry can be fully cooperative. Some years ago I was asked by a senior academic why I did not write up my action research. My response, based on a limited understanding of action research, was that my assignments were not action research projects. I had not considered my assignment roles in that context. A typical assignment involves achieving an objective imposed by a sponsor through the efforts of individuals who are subordinate in the organisational hierarchy. As such, it is not a



cooperative enquiry, as described by Coghlan and Brannick (2005), but falls within the “co-option critique” (Cooke, 2006) and is a managerialist form of action research (Cooke, 2006). At best, participants have some freedom to choose how they deliver imposed objectives. I work with colleagues in a collaborative problem-solving relationship, the outputs of which are a solution to a problem and new knowledge for all the collaborators. And I now see that in the context of action research.

Narrowing the idea of action research to include only fully cooperative enquires fails to acknowledge the following:

- *“Every action and every inquiry is implicitly action inquiry.*
- *“Action inquiry interweaves research and practice in the present.*
- *“We almost never realize or remember in the course of the routines and the interruptions of our days that we may intentionally engage in action inquiry.*
- *“Action inquiry seeks to interweave subjective, intersubjective, and objective data—subjective data about our own intent for the future, intersubjective data about what is going on at present from the divergent points of view of different participants, and objective data about what has actually been produced with what quality in the past.*
- *“The special power of action inquiry—transforming power—comes from a combination of dedication to our intent or shared vision; alertness to gaps among vision, strategy, performance, and outcomes in ourselves and others; and a willingness to play a leading role with others in organizational or social transformations, which includes being vulnerable to transformation ourselves.”*

(Torbert, 2004)

Equality, as a value, is complex. At a fundamental level, all men and woman are equal, but equality is a multifaceted idea. I distinguish among domain expertise, technical expertise and process expertise, where domain expertise relates to contextual knowledge, typically in change management (e.g., Spender’s (1989) industrial recipes), technical expertise is professional knowledge (i.e., *know-that*) and process expertise is *know-how*. Accordingly, I qualify my commitment to equality but not in such a way that makes one human being superior to another. All people have equal worth, but some have greater talent in a particular context than others. Recognising where that talent exists is an important leadership role.



In many situations I have greater expertise than those I am dealing with. It is why they have brought me in. The relationship is unequal. I could equalise it by not using my expertise, but then my presence is pointless. My commitment to equality includes a commitment to respect people as individuals and for their talent, to recognise where their talent falls short of what is required in a situation and to help them to develop the required talent or to change their relationship with the situation. Above all, it is a commitment to treat people fairly.

McNiff's (2013) discussion of democracy caused me to reflect on the concept in the context of management and the idea of equality. My position is that an effective manager is a cooperative leader. My MBA tutoring experience with mid-career army officers suggests a model of collaborative leadership, in which leaders draw on the knowledge of their team before making a decision. The leader owns the decision. Army officers say that people get killed when the chain of command is not clear. That implies hierarchy, but there is nothing wrong with hierarchy. Michels (as cited in Smelser, 2011) shows that to be effective, even anarchist groups need to develop an internal hierarchy. The error is where the hierarchy suppresses the contributions a team could make to the outcome. Good leaders increase their capability to succeed by leveraging their team's experience. This does not imply democracy, but it does hold explicit the right of everyone in the team to be listened to and to have their views taken into account in the weighing of options; ultimately, however, the leader must lead and accept responsibility for the outcome.

That responsibility involves a second attribute of leadership. In my view a manager accepts responsibility for his team. That responsibility means personal accountability when things go wrong. A team member once described this to me as "air cover", enabling them to get on with the job while I dealt with senior managers. But it does not mean taking credit for the work of others. Leadership involves publicly acknowledging the contributions made by individuals and ensuring they have every opportunity to present their work. Again, it is a matter of treating people fairly. My experience is that this approach increases the likelihood of success.

The epistemological position in action research closely resembles the position laid out earlier in this chapter. Individuals are located in a social context that informs their perceptions of reality, emerges from experience and is ever-changing. I describe in Chapter 3 the process of knowledge creation and in the earlier part of this chapter the reality that knowledge, however useful, is never objective or complete. McNiff (2013, p. 30) outlines the implications of this

for practice, which includes understanding what you know might not be helpful or appropriate in resolving a situation. A commitment to action is a commitment to an open mind and to reflection in and on action (Schön, 1983, 1995).

Action research implies a number of methodological assumptions. Section 6.5.5 contains a discussion of these assumptions as well as the approach taken to developing the case study reported in Chapter 8. I now deal with general issues of methodology.

## *6.6. Methodology*

This section is concerned with methodology and method. McNiff (2013) groups methodology with ontology, epistemology and socio-political intent to frame the action researchers do and why they do it. That grouping represents a holistic approach to research, which is reflected in this section.

McKercher argues that “an effective researcher should be flexible enough to be able to work within the most appropriate paradigm given the nature of the research problem under investigation” (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Within the pragmatist tradition, that statement is an invitation to use the array of research methodologies as a toolbox, choosing and applying each when deemed helpful in a given situation.

My research has two foci: The first is the validation and development of my practice as an interim manager, and the second is to add to the knowledge of interim managers. The subsidiary particulars (Tsoukas, 2005) are the approaches I have taken to each outcome.

My starting point is to establish a baseline derived from the practice of other interim managers. There is a contradiction in the idea of a baseline (which implies a reductionist approach and the creation of a technical rational outcome) and the epistemological values described in this paper. I have linked pragmatism and constructionism as a way of understanding people and their relationships. An alternative view of the constructivist approach comes from understanding how social order is constructed through talk and interaction (Elliott, 2005). Interesting though that project might be, it is not my project. In adopting a naturalist approach, I am interested in the four questions posed by Elliott (2005): What experience do people have? What is happening? What are people doing? And what does it mean to them? However, I see constructionism in the process, as the interviews are

jointly constructed through a process of question, answer and elicitation. The “baseline” is a product of several cycles of activity, only some of which involve the subjects interviewed.

The interviews might best be thought of as conversations between practitioners, and, in fact, I conceptualised the later interviews with interim management agents in this way. I influenced how the interview developed through my known status as an interim manager, through setting the scene and purpose at the start of the interviews, and through my opening question. By encouraging response to and discussion of one point during the interview, other points may have been neglected (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). In these ways I was a part of the descriptive process, and my involvement continued through reflection on the interview, both individually and collectively, and through identifying the topics and constructs to be developed in the resulting report.

What emerges is a view of interim management that is jointly authored by the interview subjects and me, but where I held the blue pencil of the editor. In that sense the presentation of the interviews in Chapter 7 is a contextualised interpretation (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) of interim management. Its value is as evidence of practice and in the contribution it makes to the development of a middle-range theory of interim management.

I next discuss the process of building the baseline.

#### *6.6.1. Building the Baseline*

My experience, and the experience of the interim managers I have previously interviewed (Tyrrell, 2004a), suggests that interim managers are predominantly involved in changing organisations. The 2004 interviews were semi-structured, and although the interim managers developed a number of points, the interviews stayed broadly within the scope of the interview instrument. Those managers were explicitly employed in project-based change management. The employers surveyed in 2006 reported a mix of interim management work, and the results indicated a drift away from gap filling and towards specific project work. Finally, Goss and Bridson (1998) present a typology of interim management roles, two of which—functional stopgap (applied consultancy) and transitional stopgap (transformational leader)—are explicitly concerned with organisational change. The third category, instrumental stopgap, is concerned with management temping.

I assumed management temps are located in the line management hierarchy. Was there a difference between project- and hierarchy-based interim managers? My first cohort might be grouped together as applied consultants. Might the second group be management temps? At this stage I had two questions in mind: Is there a difference between project- and hierarchy-based interim managers, and how did interim managers achieve change in organisations? There was some evidence to help answer the second question in the transcripts from the 2004 cohort. For the second interview cohort, I recruited interim managers who were employed as line managers. I had in mind Glaser and Strauss's (1967) "what's going on here" question. In addition, their process of tracing the observation into the literature was influential in my thinking and in developing the contents of my literature review.

Figure 21 An Enquiry into What Interim Managers Do

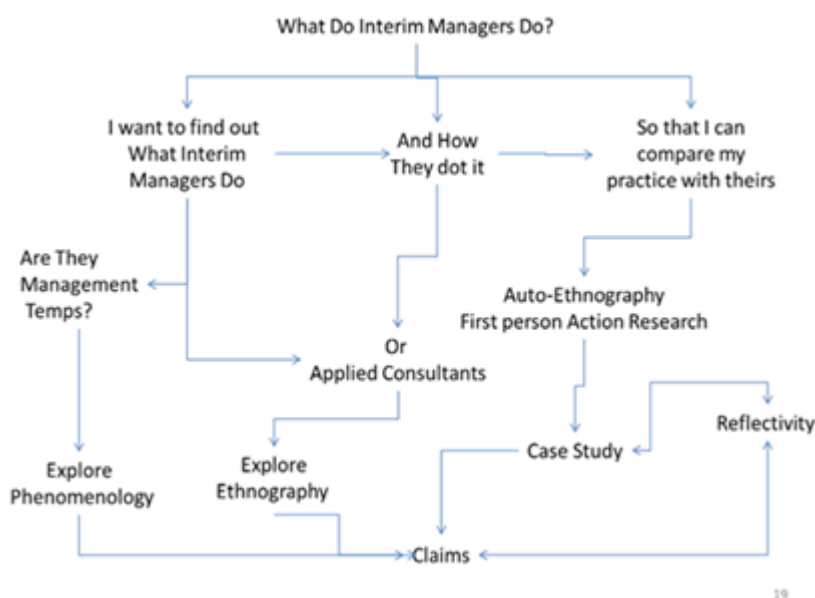


Figure 21 illustrates how my thinking developed over the course of the process. As discussed in Chapter 7, the second interview cohort spoke of an approach to their work that suggested applied consultancy, although that expression was not used. This presented the

opportunity to develop the second line of enquiry in the interviews: how did interim managers achieve change in organisations? The transcripts from the 2004 interviews had prepared me for that contingency.

Figure 22 Developing the Approach

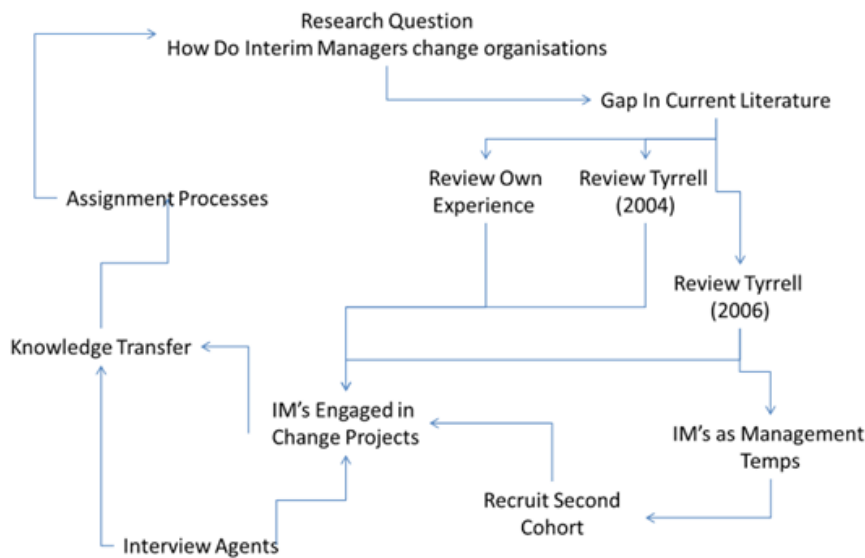


Figure 22 outlines how this element of my research developed. Looking at how interim managers change organisations shifted the focus of my research toward the process of interim management within assignments. From there I could develop

a typical assignment approach as a baseline against which to assess my approach.

In the following section, I discuss my methodological approach and method for this element of my project.

#### 6.6.2. Stage 1: Methodology

There are three components to most methodological approaches in the social sciences (O'Leary, 2013) the participants, the data collection method and the intended mode of analysis. The intended mode of analysis includes consideration of research paradigms. In this section I deal with those three topics but begin with the issue of methodology.

My original intension was to use grounded theory for the analysis, in the event I changed the process of analysis as I moved through and considered the data.

The adoption of grounded theory does not imply a methodological commitment, although the approach in its modern usage is typically associated with interpretivism (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Grounded theory is not a unified framework (Denzin, 2010). Denzin identifies seven different versions, or flavours, but Bryant and Charmaz (2010) suggest that most scholars accept the primacy of the Glaserian school, the Strauss and Corbin school and the constructivist school associated with Charmaz (2006).

In light of earlier work, where I used situational analysis in an assignment at a professional regulator, I briefly considered Clarke's (2005) situational form of grounded theory. On further reflection, however, it became clear that its focus on the relationship among social structure, social action and infrastructure would lead me away from the primary purpose of this research. Of the remaining approaches, I was temperamentally aligned with the idea of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The approach adopts the "*inductive, comparative, emergent and open ended way of working*" advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Morse, 2009) whilst distancing itself from the objectivist position of Glaser and Strauss' original work. I found the underlying positivist epistemology in the original approach unhelpful.

My reading of Strauss and Corbin (1998) was more enigmatic. Strauss had a Chicago School background, which emphasised pragmatism (Star, 2010), and his pre-*Discovery* work indicated a constructionist perspective (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010). However, Strauss and Corbin (1998) show no sign of that heritage. The book appears to perpetuate the positivist approach apparent in *Discovery* (Charmaz, 2006). In the third edition of the book, Corbin, on behalf of herself and the late Anselm Strauss, affirms a commitment to pragmatism and Chicago interactionism (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In addition, she notes that she continues to embrace a constructivist perspective, post-modernism and self-reflectivity.<sup>3</sup>

Pragmatism represents a theory of knowledge rooted in action and interaction. Dewey (1929) states, "*ideas are not statements of what is or has been but of acts to be performed*" (as cited in Corbin and Strauss, 2008). According to Corbin and Strauss, knowledge arises through the action and interaction of self-reflective beings, implying that knowledge is a thing in action. These ideas echo the Habermasian view of knowledge as an activity undertaken by a "*real person who is driven by particular desires and interests*" (McNiff, 2013).

McNiff (2013) adopts and extends Habermas's typology of human interests to give categories of technical, practical, emancipatory, relational or dialogical interests, and I now deal with those categories.

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<sup>3</sup> She writes in Chapter 1 that the part of the chapter she attributes to herself and Strauss was intended for the second (1998) edition but was omitted at the insistence of the publisher who thought a philosophical chapter would inhibit sales.

Chapter 2 positions the technical as the bedrock of business school education. It is one of Mintzberg's (2004) three domains of management—the scientific or analytical—and is largely derived from Modes 1 and 2 knowledge production (Scott et al., 2004). Schön (1983) describes a curriculum hierarchy in professional training between Modes 1 and 2 (Gibbons et al., 1994)<sup>4</sup>, in which basic and applied sciences are preferred over practice-derived learning. The implication is epistemological, ontological and axiological assumptions that veer towards positivism. (See Table 9, which implies methodological assumptions, and Table 10, which implies a deductive approach to research.) The research will be of cause and effect, using a static design, where the categories are agreed upon in advance and the results can be generalised and validated through replicability (6 and Bellamy, 2012).

*Practical* knowledge sits within Scott et al.'s (2004) Mode 3 knowledge and emancipatory knowledge within their Mode 4. Practical Mode 3 knowledge is derived through reflection in action, (Schön, 1983, 1995). Action implies interaction with others. Citing Habermas, McNiff (2013) argues that the need goes beyond rational interaction and scientific enquiry and involves understanding people and their world views, meaning making and interpretation. The discussion at page 97 is relevant, as it records the risk and consequence of the situatedness of the researcher being reflected in the researcher–subject relationship. Awareness of that possibility makes it less likely that a researcher will assume the right to speak on the subject's behalf.

*Emancipatory* interests are located in Scott et al.'s Mode 4 and in what Schön (1983) terms reflection on action. In Mode 4 the research focus is on substituting different values and perspectives on the prevailing institutions and discourse. Reflecting on action enables critique, assumption testing and restructuring of understanding.

My first thought was that *relational and dialogical* interests had no analogue in the Scott et al. (2004) typology. However, reflecting on the experience of working with an outsource contractor (discussed in section 1.2) led me to link *know-why* and *care-why* with Scott et al.'s Mode 4 knowledge—and with that link, to bring relational and dialogical interests into Mode 4.

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<sup>4</sup> Schön does not use the additional refinement proposed by Scott et al 2004

*Relational* interest is about relationship with others. Within this construct individuals have a mutual, but individual, responsibility to act and to contribute to learning and wellbeing. The focus of the research is on those relationships. This concept is closely linked to the last of McNiff's interests, the dialogical.

Finally, dialogical interest reflects a "*mindset that sees relationships more than things*" (McNiff, 2013). McNiff's brief description of this relationship merits reflection. The general proposition involves the development of empathy (see the discussion in section 3.6). In developing empathy, I seek to understand what someone means by what they say. I do not assume, at least in the early part of a relationship, that what I understand to be said is what is meant. Bohm and Nichol (2004) put it that the point of dialogue is to understand "*the processes of assumption, and not just the assumptions themselves*". I link these ideas to a social context that values relations with both people and things—with social interactionism, with pragmatist philosophy, and with the constructionism perspective developed in Chapter 3.

Latour (2005) argues that we should follow, and understand, relationships to construct the social. He uses the term *actants* to group actors with the things they interact with. In doing so, he recognises, and my experience confirms, that "things" are instrumental in the development of individual thinking and intersubjectivity. Martin (1992), in a similar way, links ritual and symbols with cultural transmission and transformation. Understanding the resulting worldview requires an open mind that accepts that an actor's honest belief is a truth to them. In this context dialogical thinking requires the researcher (or manager) to examine a situation from within those truths and to attempt to understand them in the context in which they were forged.

The social interactionist perspective considers interaction between people. It has relevance to dialogical interest in its assumption that interaction is not related directly to another's action but is based on interpretation of that action (e.g., see Blumer, 1986). In turn, pragmatism is concerned with the act itself along with the relationship of thought to the act (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

Taken together, these ideas relate a dialogical interest to an interest in why an individual acts, which implies a need to understand how an individual envisions a situation and his or her position in it. Practical, emancipatory, relational and dialogical interests share an



interpretivist perspective on research (Table 9), which implies an epistemological assumption that knowledge is derived from the subjective evidence of participants.

Table 10 sets out the axiological and general ontological assumptions of the interpretivist position. Work that draws on the pragmatist and interactionist traditions makes further assumptions that are reproduced in Table 11.

*Table 11 Axiological and General Ontological Assumptions of Interpretivism (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, Kindle Loc. 222–228)*

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All citations in the Table are as cited in Corbin and Strauss, 2008.

Figure 22 shows the methodological implications of this discussion on my research design. My starting point is a world of complexity in which there are no simple answers. Consistent with my pragmatist beliefs, my approach resembles Denzin and Lincoln's (2013) methodological bricoleur. This is reflected in my inductive approach to the literature, where I adopted elements of grounded theory, and in the mixed methodologies depicted in Figure 22 through which I have developed my approach to this research. In that context research is an interactive process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013) shaped, inter alia, by the factors previously described and by its developing outcome.

#### *6.6.3. Stage 1: Method*

Despite affirming the paradigmatic roots of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) approach to grounded theory, Glaser's critique of the direction Strauss and Corbin had taken grounded theory (as cited in Charmaz, 2006) is confirmed by my own analysis. In moving the basic concept towards verification, the Strauss and Corbin approach tends to force data into preconceived categories (Charmaz, 2006).

The essential components of a grounded theory approach include coding, memo writing, and sampling for theory development and comparative methods ( Charmaz, 2006; Silverman, 2013). The methodological assumption is that theory emerges from the data without prior theoretical contamination.

The idea of a *tabula rasa*, if taken literally, means that a researcher with any knowledge of a subject could not investigate that subject using grounded theory. Kelle's (2010) report on methodological reflection by junior researches shows the difficulty they had in attempting to set aside their prior knowledge in structuring their data. However, an open mind does not imply an empty mind (Dey, 2010). Gibson (2010) questions whether theoretical sensitivity could be developed without prior knowledge of the literature, and Bryant and Charmaz (2010) identify the prior technical knowledge of the methodology's founders. The idea of a *tabula rasa* has less to do with an absence of knowledge than it does with not allowing the prior literature to provide a framework for the research (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010).

Notwithstanding all of this consideration of grounded theory, I found I was following the protocols of grounded theory without adopting the underlying philosophy. In effect I was using the protocols as a method. Charmaz (2006) points out that many researchers claim to be using grounded theory but are not doing anything that can be recognisable as such when considered in the most inclusive definition of the term (Hood, 2010). Hood compares a generic model of qualitative research with grounded theory and identifies a number of differences. In Table 12I have done the same, but using a different general model of qualitative research and Charmaz's (2006) process of constructionist grounded theory.

<i>Table 12</i> Analytical Methods		
<b>Charmaz (2006)</b>	<b>Miles and Huberman (1994)</b>	<b>Process Followed</b>
Research problem and opening research question		
	Data collection	Data Collection
Initial coding and data collection	Giving labels (codes) to words, phrases, paragraphs and so on and labelling them as examples of particular	Giving labels (codes) to words, phrases, paragraphs and so on and labelling them as examples of particular

	“things” that may be of interest in the interviews	“things” that may be of interest in the interviews
Initial memos, raising codes to tentative categories	Adding comments, reflection and so on (commonly referred to as memos)	Initial memos
Data collection: focussed coding,		
advanced memos, refining conceptual categories	Going through the material to identify similar phrases, patterns, themes, relationships, sequences, differences between subgroups and so on	Going through the material to identify similar phrases, patterns, themes, relationships, sequences, differences between subgroups and so on
Theoretical sampling seeks specific new data	Using these patterns/themes and so on to help focus on further data collection	
Theoretical memo writing and further refining of concepts,		Theoretical memo-writing and further refining of concepts
integrating memos, diagramming concepts	Gradually developing a small set of generalisations that cover consistencies found in the data and linking those generalisations to a formalised body of knowledge in the form of constructs (sets of concepts or ideas) or theories	Developing detailed memos around each theme and relating them to the literature.
Writing the first draft		Writing the first draft

For simplicity, iterative cycles within the Charmaz process and the process followed have been omitted.

The comparison in Table 12 shows that my work tended towards a general approach regarding the data. It should be remembered that the purpose at this stage was to develop sufficient clarity to trace ideas back to the literature. Further iterative cycles would increase my adherence to the grounded theory protocol, but my reflection on the data suggested another course.

With the data in front of me and coding completed, it was the conversational nature of the interviews that stood out most of all. Each interview opened with me inviting an interviewee to discuss his or her experience as an interim manager. The process became a constructed narrative between me as researcher and the subjects as we jointly built an understanding of their working life. In light of that insight, I moved from a grounded theory to a narrative approach by the end of the interview cycle. I have stumbled as I have tried to represent those conversations. With grounded theory, the data can become fractured due to extracting ideas for interpretation of each segment (Charmaz, 2006). I wanted to keep the stories intact. My approach was to examine the data thematically, as I outlined earlier, and to use the resulting constructs to build a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of interim management.

The use of the protocols of grounded theory was not wasted. I took from grounded theory the process of memo writing described by Goulding (2002) and Charmaz (2006). In this process I found it helpful to distinguish between Marshall's (2006) inner and outer arch of inquiry—between the public and the private. I have always made notes of what people say in meetings; a colleague once commented that you can take the boy out of law, but you can't take law out of the boy. Nonetheless, I have never been good at making study notes, and although I have a weakness in that area, I now understand that I learn through doing. In my professional life I maintain two notebooks: a record of what happened and a record of my reflections including my thoughts, feelings and overall understanding of a situation.

I write memos of my reading (Exhibits 1 and 2), of meetings I attend (Exhibit 3) and of my reflections (Exhibit 4). Sections 1.2 and 1.3 have their origins in memos. I find that writing a memo is not simply an *aide-mémoire* but an important process in learning and the development of insight. I have taken this process into my teaching practice, where I write up and share with my students my reflections on tutorials and day schools, moving those thoughts to my outer arch through publication in our online conferences (Exhibit 5) to stimulate discussion. Those notes go beyond a record of the meeting but link through to other areas of the curriculum that I believe are relevant to the discussion.

Reflectivity is not simply about taking notes or keeping a research diary. In describing my methodological journey, I have tried to be accountable in the sense suggested by Lee (2009)—“*where the intellectual and analytical processes are open and available to readers*”.

#### 6.6.4 Stage 2: Methodology and Method

Narrative enquiry shares with grounded theory the idea of starting from the phenomena. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest narrative researchers may engage in any number of research methods to facilitate the development of a narrative. My focus has been on understanding the experience of interim managers through Elliott's (2005) four questions (Section 6.6 above). That involved engagement with the phenomena of interim management as experienced by the interview cohort.

Etherington (2004, p. 75) lays out the ontological and epistemological assumptions of narrative enquiry. The epistemological assumptions echo the discussion in Chapter 3 and the idea that the world is socially constructed. It is constructed within Etherington's ontology or worldview, through stories told and retold. Where those stories are in conflict, they represent different realities rather than different perspectives. Etherington describes the methodology of narrative research as a process of collecting, analysing and representing peoples stories as told by them.

Perception, rather than socio-historic context or an imposed version of "reality", is the subject of the investigation. The interviews are presented as an interpretive study, but, as noted earlier, they are not an objective reflection of what was said but the result of co-authorship through the dialogical process described earlier (Section 6.6). In that sense the stories are a form of narrative knowing, created and constructed through the retelling of lived experience, enabling sense to be made of ambiguity and complexity (Bruner, 1986).

The adoption of a narrative approach addresses a difficulty I have had throughout my doctorate studies and which I refer to in the introduction to this paper. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the problem under the heading "Phenomena (What?)". There are difficulties in formulating a research question at the outset because the "what" of the enquiry evolves as the enquiry proceeds and might very well emerge in the preparation of the research text (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). My research question was developed before my turn to narrative enquiry but evolved further after that decision.

My use of the protocols of grounded theory was an appropriate way to proceed (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) because the processes of memo writing and finding themes and constructs offered insight into the data. However, standing back from the detail of the data

and reassembling it in my mind gave me a window into the phenomena of interim management.

The interim managers in the cohort interviewed in 2004 were all known to me. For the current research, I asked an interim agency to nominate candidates to be interviewed for this research. I asked that the nominations be from a number of sectors and that they, typically, should have worked in line-management roles. There is a residual risk of bias in drawing the sample from one agency, but I judged that risk to be minimal. My knowledge of the industry suggests that interim managers move freely between agents.

I wanted to avoid the constraint of a semi-structured interview for the second cohort. The purpose of a semi-structured approach is to channel the responses in a way that enables a predetermined research question to be addressed. The approach imposes the researcher's agenda upon the respondent. I designed life history interviews (Bryman, 2008) during which I invited respondents to discuss their experience as interim managers. My intention was to allow the respondents to develop their stories as they saw fit. Then, I would analyse the results using grounded theory protocols. I hoped to be able to test Goss and Bridson's (1998) typology of interim management with this process, but that was a secondary objective. My primary interest was the interim manager in the context of an interim management assignment. Within Mishler's framework (as cited in Elliott, 2005), I was interested in the content of the interview because it reflected the actual events and experiences of the subjects.

The interim manager interviews were prearranged, and the respondents were first contacted by me to check their willingness to participate and to outline what the interviews were about. At this time respondents were told that I would like to interview them about their experiences as working interim managers. This life history approach was intended to encourage as wide-ranging a discussion as possible. As the respondents had notice of the interview, they had time to reflect on their role and how they would like to present it to me. There is a potential bias inherent in that opportunity (Elliott, 2005) and an inherent opportunity to present a role persona (Goffman, 1990). Consistency across the interviews suggests this did not happen. The interviews were recorded, except on the occasion when the recording failed, and I made extensive notes during the sessions.

Riessman (as cited in Bryman, 2008) finds that asking a question such as "tell me what happened" followed by "what happened next" encourages the development of narrative

stories, but she also notes it is necessary to ask follow-up questions to stipulate the subject to continue the story. I noted earlier (Section 6.6) that questioning can be steered towards the researcher's areas of interest at the expense of topics that the interviewee might otherwise wish to develop. This tendency may be greater in phonological research, where interviews tend towards rich conversations between researcher and subject (O'Leary, 2013). This influence in the interview is part of a process of coproduction in which the interview becomes a joint narrative between researcher and subject.

Geertz (1973) recognises the methodological problems of moving from interviews and observations to thick descriptions. He describes the process as imperfect but ultimately resolved in the difference between thin and thick descriptions, where thin descriptions are empirical observations (e.g., the boy winked) and thick descriptions describe meaning (e.g., the boy winked because...).

I subsequently held a further series of interviews with interim management agents. My approach to these interviews differed from that used with the interim managers. The different approach did not initially emerge from a detailed research design. In fact I had no intention of interviewing agents when first thinking about my research design. The first agent interview occurred because he wanted to talk to me about my research. He raised the subject at the end of an appointment for another purpose and was keen to contribute his views about the interim management market and interim managers. We talked for some time, and I came away with some data and the idea that agents are a rich source of knowledge that I ought to exploit.

In thinking about additional interviews with agents, I believed that due to their time-constraints, the opportunities for interviews were more likely to flow when we had a reason to meet for another purpose. Having been through the cycle, I do not think this was a valid consideration, as I found agents were more than prepared to find time to talk about their industry. Nevertheless, the agent interviews were informally arranged, typically as a follow up from meeting for another purpose. A number of them took place over coffee and one over a good dinner at a London restaurant.

Given the circumstances, the opportunity for the agents to reflect on how they wished to present themselves pre-interview was limited. To that extent, they were "in role", talking to an interim manager with whom they have had commercial dealings about interim management and its market.

Sampling was opportunistic and largely based on mutual availability and the willingness to participate. All of the agents represent well-established London agencies that have been in business for many years. I had a pre-existing relationship with the respondents, in most cases reaching back over a number of years.

The intended format of the interviews was to encourage the agents to talk about interim management. In reality, very little encouragement was required. I had an agenda built around Goss and Bridson (1998), but I did not try to impose that agenda. The respondents guided the conversation where they wished and in doing so covered most of the issues raised by Goss and Bridson. When they did not, I encouraged the development of a thread in the conversation, typically by referring to contemporary events: *“What’s your view on the trend of temp to perm?”* I discuss the consequence of steering the interview in this way in Section 6.6. The circumstances of the interviews made contemporaneous note taking impossible. I made notes of the interviews as soon as possible and typically on the train on the way home.

Chapter 7 is based on the interviews of interim managers and agents, the process of interaction between interviewer and interviewee, my interpretation of what was said and my reflections in and on action. In that sense the interviews were the start of an ongoing process of analysis about their and my experience, and Chapter 9 is an interim report on that process.

#### *6.6.5 Stage 3: Methodology and Method*

The case study in Chapter 8 reflects a number of enquiries. The core enquiries are the assignments themselves, which were managed as action research projects. However, in reporting the assignments, my focus is not on the assignments themselves but my action learning that came therein. Inherent in the reporting process is my reflection on action (Schön, 1983, 1995) and my development as a heuristic researcher (Moustakas, 1990). Taken together, Chapters 7 and 8 present a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the work of an interim manager. Each layer of the research reflects a different methodological perspective.

Schön (1983, 1995) locates experiential learning in reflection on action. The idea implies practice, reflection on practice, and modification of practice. There is nothing inherently collaborative about this. It is possible to conceive of a situation in which practice and reflection on practice is a solitary activity. However, action research implies a level of interaction, through which an individual learns and develops. In that sense all action research



is first-person action research (or practice within you in the context of action learning), and some action research will be explicitly collaborative and developmental at the group and social levels. First-person action research may be implicitly collaborative and incidental, characterised by encounters with people who share a commitment to the values of action research.

The implication for practice is that throughout a project and beyond a researcher's knowledge is work in progress, developed in reflection in and on action (Schön, 1983, 1995). This idea involves a distinct epistemological shift from a traditional research paradigm, by which a researcher brings to a role a distinct body of knowledge and practice is something to observe and comment on. I draw this distinction in my teaching supervision, where I distinguish the kinds of learning a student gains from a project. McNiff (2013, p. 34) describes this internalisation of experience as I-theory. She links that idea with the tacit knowledge of the practitioner, which *"emerges in practice as a personal form of explanation for what is done and what is known"* (p. 34). Linking I-theory with personal belief systems that incorporate values and relationships together creates a *"living practice [...] congruent with the belief system of the knower"* (p. 34), but allows for the type of contradiction I described in Section 6.5

In 2006, Whitehead and McNiff (2006) linked these ideas to the concept of living theory. Living theory implies making sense of what we are doing through researching it and, in that research, gathering data and evidence that can be used to prove our claim for knowledge. The approach places the "I" at the centre of the enquiry (McNiff, 2013, p. 35). Later, McNiff (2013, p. 35), while accepting its value in its original context, repurposes I-theory from a solely problem-centric view to include the development of human potential, relationships and accountability. The underlying epistemology remains largely the same (e.g., see Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p. 25) in the recognition of different forms of knowledge as well as the capacity of individuals to create their own knowledge and to draw knowledge from the insights of others. The methodological requirement, however, is to produce work that influences the quality of lives of others. I believe this is an important shift from I to we—and is reflective of action research values. Moving from I to we places the relationships and values in a central position.

The case study presented in Chapter 8 is a longitudinal study of practice. I was a participant observer (Alvesson, 1999, as cited in Coghlan and Brannick, 2005, p. 49). My work as an

interim manager came first, and my opportunities to observe were subsidiary to my primary role. Throughout the period I maintained notebooks in which I recorded day-to-day activities and my reflections.

Geertz (1973) suggests that a suitable outcome for ethnography is the production of a thick description. He argues that the ethnographer is “*faced with [...] a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular and inexplicit, and he must somehow first grasp and then to render*” (Kindle Loc. 255).

My reflective notes were contemporary. In their preparation I found myself sympathising with Watson (2001) when he writes that he could not wait to get away from a conversation so that he could write up his field notes. My colleagues are accustomed used to me making notes, but situational reflexivity, where I monitor my performance, is not a public activity and took place largely at the end of the working day and within the privacy of a journal.

To render the narrative in the way described by Geertz (1973) required a second level of reflection—epistemological reflexivity—through which I consider the assumptions I made in the interpretations of my filed notes. The notes made during assignments freeze events in the context of an event (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 83), but time and knowledge does not stand still. Time and the development of knowledge alter one’s perspective. They have the effect of smoothing, obscuring and enriching recollection, even when prompted by field notes. The field notes themselves are not interpreted with the knowledge held at their creation but through the lens of contemporary knowledge. Consequently, the researcher and his worldview are interwoven into the presentation.

This is particularly so of the narrative in Chapter 8. In that account I provide insight into the working life of an interim manager, and evidence my developing interest and practice in action research and process consulting. In the final chapter of this work, I bring together my practice with the description of the practices of others and the literature and present my claims.

## 6.7 Ethics

The general ethical position held by social researchers may be summarised as three rules: do no harm, do not breach confidentiality and be true to the data. From that simple position,

ethical issues have moved to the centre of current discussions about social research. As a result, there is currently moral panic regarding ethical issues in social research (Bryman, 2008; Van den Hoonaard, 2001).

The ethical issues of problem-centric research are different from the general ethical position in research. The journey of each assignment starts with a problem, and, in the context of this paper, the problem is in a workplace setting. It is likely that the problem will somehow need to be addressed. The actors are involved because of their proximity to and their relationship with the problem. They are not selected to be part of a research agenda, but are part of the agenda because the problem has been selected for action. That selection, in the context of much management research, may very well have been by their manager. *Qua* problem, they are conscripts. As such, they differ from participants who volunteer to take part in a programme.

The position of an *in-situ* researcher, a researcher working as a complete participant within his or her own organisation, is ethically distinct from that of a researcher who enters a situation to study the problem identified. The embedded ethnographic researcher potentially has a number of roles. Gold (1969) identifies this range of roles, from complete observer to complete participant. Gans (1968) identifies three research roles—total participant, research participant and observational researcher—and suggests that in any one project a researcher may pass through all three roles. The complete participant, which is the role I adopted as an interim manager on assignment, by definition is a covert role, *qua* researcher, as the “ethnographic observer attempts to be an unobtrusive observer of the inner life of an organisation” (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005, p. 50). Extreme examples include Holdaway’s (1982) study of the police force and Mattley’s (2006) investigation of the sex industry.

Aside from the extreme examples of Holdaway and Mattley, working as a complete observer presents a number of ethical issues (e.g., the extent to which I can report on activities and the participants in them). Disclosing the subject of my doctoral studies (following Mattley, 2006) provides an explanation for my wider interest in the subject. However, that knowledge does not imply consent to participate in my research.

I decided, late one day, and after my work was substantially complete, to try to bring my research within the current ethical regime of the Nottingham DBA programme. There is no

obligation on my part to do this, as my registration pre-dates those regulations, but it seemed to be the right thing to do.

That decision has had a number of consequences. It has not affected the interviews carried out for this paper, as each interviewee gave consent to participate in this research.

The major impact has been on the extent to which I can use material developed during my assignments to validate my claims. In the context of this research, the people with whom I worked were not taking part in research but carrying out activities that they were obliged to undertake in the course of their employment to achieve an objective within that context. The change to first-person inquiry relocated the research subject to my praxis as opposed to their participation.

The research also involved a considerable number of people and groups across a range of organisations over an extended period. Seeking individual informed consent, as Homan et al. (1982) observed, would be impractical. It would mean seeking consent from people to whom I no longer have ready access or any awareness of their whereabouts in order to obtain permission to use material recording of events from several years ago that they would likely not recall.

I reflected a great deal on this problem. The traditional ethical research paradigm focuses on researchers using subjects to obtain information to meet their own individual research objectives (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005). This is what I did in my interviews of interim managers and interim management agents, and it comfortably falls within the Nottingham Business School's current ethical regime.

The complete participant researcher faces an altogether messier situation. The participants in the activities reported in the research are not participating in the research, *per se*, but in activities that form part of their work commitment. These actions are observed by the participant observer, who may very well have an overriding obligation, *qua* participation, to report on participation and observation. In those circumstances the ethical guarantees of confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and protection from harm should not and, in some circumstances, cannot not be offered (Williamson and Prosser, 2002).

The essence of Williamson and Prosser's position is that action research is a collaborative process that, in an organisational context, cannot be carried out such that the contribution of individual participants is disguised. Further, they argue that as action research is a journey that involves participation, reflection and purposeful action, it is unlikely that informed consent is a meaningful concept. The third strand of their argument relates to the political dimension of much action research and questions whether a commitment to do no harm is consistent with a professional duty to act in the best interests of patient and clients.

By analogy, much of Williamson and Prosser's argument can be applied to all participant research. The events recorded through participation have already been "published" within the organisation, and the fact of participation and contribution is known. The question becomes not whether the acts should be published—they are already known within the organisational domain—but whether they should be published further.

A secondary issue is the question of authorship. If I observe an act in the context of my complete participation in an organisation and record that act in my journal, perhaps reflect on it, am I prohibited from reporting both the act and/or my reflection on it? Although I am not the author of the act, I am the author of the record of the act, and my narrative of the act—the facts I note, my interpretation of those facts and my reflections—are my own.

These issues are difficult, and I have struggled with them through a number of drafts as I sought to deal with the various ethical conflicts. I do not pretend to have finally resolved them. I have collected data over a protracted period with the knowledge and consent of my fellow participants, who have known that my responsibilities as a participant observer preclude me from giving absolute undertakings of confidentiality. I have done so openly and in a primary context of my role as a complete participant and in a secondary context, which I have discussed with participants, of researching the contributions interim managers make to organisational change.

Underlying my thinking is the question of whether any longitudinal study can be completed if informed consent is a continuing requirement prior to publication. The principle of informed consent is rooted in medical research; a person who is invited to participate in research activities should be free to take part or refuse, and their decision should be made based on comprehensive information about the nature and the purpose of the research and the risks to which they will be exposed. As a proposition in medical research, the principle is beyond

reproach, but it is fraught with difficulties in the wider world of social research, particularly when an inductive approach to research is adopted, in which the researcher is not entirely in control of how the research will develop. In a wider context, once published, it is not possible for the researcher to say to what purposes the research will ultimately be put to (Fielding, 2008).

Most would agree that a research design should have regard for the broad general principles set out in ethical codes of conduct such as the Statement of Ethical Practice of the British Sociological Association (the BSA Practice) (BSA, 2002). The BSA Practice contains a presumption that informed consent is normally obtained from subjects who are asked to take part in research. In the introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Social Science and Medicine*, Boulton and Parker (2007) set out the tensions inherent in the desire to impose on social scientists ethical practices derived from the ethical practice thought to be applicable to biomedical research, but even in that field the position is not clear cut (Martin and Marker, 2007; Murphy and Dingwall, 2007).

The debate centres on the first two rules: do no harm and respect confidentiality. These ideas are largely accommodated within the BSA Practice. The code provides for complete participation in stating that in such circumstances informed consent is needed only “*as far as possible*”. Further, the BSA Practice suggests that “*covert methods may be justified [...] when participants change their behaviour because they know they are being studied*”. Given the well-documented Hawthorne effect, it might be supposed that the probability of subjects modifying their behaviour if they are aware that they are being studied is very high. But the BSA Practice does not invite an ethical free for all. It goes on to state that “*[i]n such studies it is important to safeguard the anonymity of research participants*”.

To draw the threads of the discussion together, the concept of informed consent presents difficulties in terms of informing subjects (e.g., are they aware of what they are consenting to?) and determining the appropriate level of consent (e.g., is it practical to seek consent, or will the act of seeking consent change the observed behaviour of the research participants?). The ethnographic researcher encounters both difficulties, particularly when the research takes the form of a longitudinal study across several research sites over an extended period or when the researcher is an in-situ researcher pursuing professional studies.

I consciously decided to keep faith with the people I have encountered in my work. I cannot expose them through further publication to a greater extent than they have been exposed through their publication in action. As a result, I have discarded material that might otherwise have been useful in evidencing my claims. Where I used material from my notebooks, I have chosen to preserve confidentiality through anonymity and to focus on the incidents of my learning from observation rather than on the underlying acts. In adopting this approach, I have charted my way through the ethical minefield that is research as a complete participant.

## Chapter 7: Perspectives on Interim Management

Because interim management is a role that users and practitioners self-describe, it is challenging to write about definitively. Your interim manager might not fit the criteria I set to define what an interim manager is. In Chapter 5 I adopted a financial test to separate interim managers from other contract workers. I also described the characteristics of interim managers. In this chapter I develop a number of perspectives on interim management, as described by practising interim managers and interim management agents. To prepare the perspectives, I interviewed five interim managers and five interim management agents. I also drew on the interviews reported in Tyrrell (2004). The interim managers were identified by an interim management agency. I dealt with the methodology and method in Chapter 6.

In developing the perspectives held in this chapter, I had in mind Elliott's (2005) narrative questions: *What experience do people have? What's happening? What are people doing? What does it mean to them?*

### 7.1 *Management Temps or Functional Consultants?*

I discussed Goss and Bridson's (1998) typology of interim management in Chapter 4. For the purposes of this chapter, I concentrate on the demand side, which suggests that interim managers' work falls into one of three categories: management temps, applied consultants or transformational leaders. The interim managers interviewed in Tyrrell (2004a) might be described as applied consultants. My own practice is a mix of applied consultancy; I am a qualified enterprise architect and process consultant. My work might be either project or line based, but I do not consider myself to be a management temp in either role or context. To test the dyad of management temp–applied consultant, I ensured that the interim managers interviewed for this paper typically worked as line managers.

Goss and Bridson (1998) have a third demand-side category of interim managers: transformational managers. They rank transformational management as a board-level activity. Interim managers do work at that level, and I have worked with a number of them, but the majority function near to rather than on the executive level, and this is predominantly true of the interview respondents.



The interim managers interviewed self-describe their role in the line in the context of change management. This proposition is supported by the way they talk about their assignments. Keywords leap out of the interviews, including vision, leadership culture and development—words that suggest a commitment to transitional management.

Agents are less precious than interim managers when it comes to management temping. They have an interest in stopgap appointments, but those appointments suggest that the stopgap is at a senior, leadership level—an idea reinforced by the numbers of stopgap appointments resourced by IMA members (Table 1) and typical interim management daily rates. Minimum daily rates payable to interims vary from around £600—the baseline I adopted in Tyrrell (2006) to assess the top 15 interim managers' service providers using data from Executive Grapevine (2005)—to £2,500 (BIE, n.d.). One agent suggested that interim management work starts at around a daily rate of £80. Another agent argued that a payment of £4000 a week, often plus expenses, and with an agency fee overhead, (which informants typically place at 15%) represents a senior appointment and an appointment where, more likely than not, the appointee will be expected to exercise leadership skills.”

All of the interim managers interviewed have deep functional skills, but their perception of why they are employed in their roles goes beyond simply possessing those skills. The common thread across the interviews was of change management delivered through the development of the colleagues with whom they worked.

In Tyrrell (2004) interim managers' report that they inevitably spend the first week or so of their assignment reviewing the information they have been given, including their assignment brief, and that they usually negotiate changes to the brief at the end of that period. The respondents in the current research make similar comments. For example, Alison identifies the ability to assess what's needed and to be objective in that assessment as key skills of interim management, and at least one agency has formalised this process in its operating procedures through which the interim manager agrees to certain objectives with the client at the end of this assessment period.

The bespoke nature of the work is also evident in the responses. George is critical of the waves of management fashions—BPR, lean, six sigma, and the like. He insists that what is required is to understand the business as a unified system. He argues that good interim managers start with a problem definition, not a solution. That view is common across the

cohort and is reflected in considering the role as given and taken (Krantz and Maltz, 1997) and the willingness to frame issues as exam questions.

The deployment of deep functional skills in an assignment might suggest Goss and Bridson's functional specialist category, but the interims' comments speak of a wider commitment to general management, which I infer means both an ability to understand the bigger picture and concurrent abilities to communicate the vision of that picture and to manage individuals working towards that vision.

In a private meeting, the late Professor John Stopford (1939–2011) describes general management as the ability to envision the system as a whole and to understand how the system might be affected by changes within its parts. There is considerable support for this view across the interview cohort. The respondents predominantly engage in line management functions, but not in the sense of keeping a seat warm until its normal occupant returns to work. A common thread across the interviews is that an assignment is intended to have a transformational impact on the client business.

Even if the assignment is skill specific, there is a need to apply general management skills. Although an HR specialist, Joan works in turnaround situations and speaks of the need to have the skills to pull organisations together—to work through people to achieve an outcome. Sean emphasises both his wide cross-sector experience in significant IS change programmes and his people management skill. He positions interim managers as leaders rather than managers.

The distinction between leadership and management is important and implies an ability to get people to coalesce around an objective. Nayer (2013) writes of management in terms of controlling resources to achieve an outcome, comparing that process with a leader's ability to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute to organisational success. The interviews reveal a consensus that the key attributes of a leader are influence and inspiration rather than power and control.

Agents are ambivalent about functional skills. The question of generalists was discussed with three representatives of an interim agency (all of whom have worked as interim managers). One notes that she has attended a seminar in the north of England for new interim managers, where the speaker emphasised the need to have and to market identifiable functional skills.

We agreed that this approach is understandable, making marketing for the agency easier, but ultimately wrong. Interim managers need functional skills, but their utility is their skill to see the bigger picture—to take a general management perspective.

There is a wide expectation among interim management agents that the employment of an interim manager ought to be justifiable on a benefits basis. Typically, those benefits are spoken of in terms of the difference the employment will make in the business. A number of agents mention this in terms of the expectation that a significant part of the interim's role is the development of the client's staff.

In summary, both agents and interim managers expected an assignment to bring a lasting benefit to an organisation. Interims who are imbedded in the line expect to contribute functional and general management skills to an organisation. They envision their work as change managers and emphasise their role as leaders. Their emphasis on general management and leadership skills raises the question of whether interims might be used across industrial sectors.

### 7.2 *Cross-Sector Working*

Henry (2010) identifies a dichotomy between US/UK and European practice. She distinguishes the Anglo-Saxon model of management, which holds that management is a transferable skill (and which is the dominant discourse within business schools), from the French, German and Japanese traditions, which hold that management knowledge is specific to a particular industry. Spender (1989) identifies specific industry recipes that managers apply in particular industry sectors, which suggests that knowledge of the recipe is a prerequisite to working in an industry. Interim managers and most interim management agents consider the core skills of an interim to be portable across industry sectors. However, the tendency is to work within a particular sector. Both interims and agents believe that this is because clients do not think skills are portable. Clients are looking for skills in their sector and for evidence that those skills are recent. Consequently, it is difficult to deploy an interim manager with skills in one sector to an assignment in another. The exception appears to be in the case of deep functional skills. Sean, as an example, reports and takes pride in his wide cross-sectional experience.

These views are at odds with the characteristics of an interim manager (Figure 18), provided by BIE, one of the longest-established interim management agencies. BIE emphasises cross-sector experience, and, perhaps as a result of working for BIE on a number of assignments, my own experience is cross-sector. At least one agent thinks that this disadvantages me, as he says he's never quite sure what to do with me.

There is little doubt that many technical skills (e.g., skills in IT and accountancy HR) are common across organisations. Individual industries require idiosyncratic skills, with the UK energy industry being an acronymic hell for outsiders, but it is clear to me that the former, functional skills, and the latter, idiosyncratic skills, are not the skills of Henry's Anglo-Saxon model. Something more is required than mere technical skills or knowledge of an industry, and in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, that something else might be called general management. Nonetheless, it needs to be accompanied by an ability to identify the need for change and to bring that change about. I think Henry (2010) had this in mind in her discussion of entrepreneurial, transformational, visionary and distributed styles of leadership. Those skills are identified by interim managers as core interim skills and represented by leadership and tacitness, as discussed in Chapter 2.

### 7.3 *What Do Interim Managers Do?*

Ipsos MORI's (2010) report, discussed in the introduction, suggests that 24% of the interim managers placed by agents are hired to fill gaps. There is a semantic issue with this kind of data if an interim manager is to be employed in a line management role to effect change as the assignment gap manager or change manager. Across the interviews, a common experience is of being deployed to improve a process or being used as a line manager of an individual who has been identified to take the permanent role. In such a situation, the interim is often tasked with assessing the suitability of that individual for the role and with coaching him or her into the role as the interim's successor. A number of interims spoke of occupying roles and being involved in the selection and recruitment of permanent staff to take over the role. Inevitably, that individual will be less qualified than the interim. Charles notes that although the chief executive might be willing to pay a premium to effect change, once the role settles down to a "*run the business's state*", there is only a need to pay the going rate for that role.

The current market is more competitive than it has been in the recent past, and the agent interviews reveal a shift in procurement from the CEO's consultancy budget to HR and supply chain. The agents identify a shift from the personal service of old to a price-driven process by which the supply chain demands a number of CVs banded by price. Within that process, price takes precedent over qualitative judgement. However, even in this difficult climate over the last three months, one agency has told me that its business model is moving towards eliminating the client–interim interview such that the agency takes the risk of the interim's suitability for the role. The model is similar to a consultancy approach.

The data shows that interim managers, overwhelmingly, are not employed in gap management. The bias towards change management may increase upon closer analysis of what is meant by gap management.

#### 7.4 *How Do They Do It?*

Interim managers say they achieve change through the deployment of their seniority and experience within roles for which they were overqualified, and through the development of their subordinates to better fulfil the role assigned to them. The key here is experience and a willingness to develop people and processes.

In Chapter 2 I argued that managers need to learn the tacit skills of management through experience. The experience of interim managers is very different than that of typical managers. The interim managers interviewed for this paper all have deep functional skills, but they are also continuously involved in the delivery of change within organisations and across many organisations, typically through the development of groups or individuals and the traditional positioning of organisational development practitioners. Interim managers question experience, with a common saying in the community being: *“Does an individual have twenty years' experience or one year's experience twenty times?”* That saying encapsulates an idea within an interim culture that experience should be cumulative.

The respondents are engaged as interim managers for their expertise in delivery, but all interviewees emphasise that delivery is achieved through the development of people and knowledge transfer. George and Alison both note the importance of knowledge transfer. Alison states: *“I can't think of a case when I've not needed to do knowledge transfer and development.”* Joan emphasises the need to start working ourselves out of a job from the

moment we arrive through a process of people development. Sue's position is similar. For her, the interim management role is developmental, and she sees an obligation to coach, mentor and build skills—*“very much into transferring skills into the line”*—in order to enable individuals and teams to perform their role.

Simon makes the point that delivery is through people and that when he leaves, he has to leave behind a team that can do the job. He, like others, emphasises coaching and mentoring and tells a story of work he did with an operations manager in a turnaround that was material in allowing that individual to step up into a general management role. Sean mentions bringing best practice into his role and the need to tactfully move people into that practice. He is a great believer that a client gets skill transfer through using interims. *“I try and develop the staff working for me. I enjoy this aspect of the work.”* He sees himself as a leader rather than a manager.

Charles, whilst also mentioning mentoring or coaching of managers to move a situation forward, points out the need for skills assessment and the possibility both of moving people out of the business and recruiting in—both roles with which I am familiar in my own practice.

The majority of the respondents identify the developmental aspects of the role. Sean explains that the role is transitional and involves the development of individuals who will stay with the business. He also notes that contractors have a functional skillset and that their role is to provide that skillset for the benefit of the business whilst they work within it, but interim managers bring a wider, developmental skillset. Interim managers maintain, as Sean argues, a vision of what needs to be done and can inspire others to achieve it.

The issues to be addressed do not only relate to functional best practice. Sue emphasises the need to focus HR toward business needs; moreover, Charles, a supply chain specialist who works in business change, says that the problems he typically has to deal with are people issues: *“There are processes to be introduced, but they are in the tool box—the problem is how I create the culture to use the processes.”*

George's comment that attitudinal change is not cultural change points to a micro-approach to change, which is a counterpoint to the major vision-driven change programmes of the management literature (e.g., see Kotter, 1996, 2002). George makes the point forcefully and as

a defining characteristic of his practice, but each of the other respondents share this same position. An interim manager can only deliver through and with the assistance of colleagues and must, typically, use the resources that are already on site and available. In this position the ability to develop those resources so that they can contribute to a successful delivery is a critical success factor, and of course there is a collateral legacy benefit to the client company.

These views accord with my experience of the role of interim management. A key function of the interim manager is to develop the organisation so that an interim manager is no longer required.

The discussion so far in this section is of what interim managers do in terms of organisational development but not how they do it. I was keen to explore storytelling and do so in a separate section, but the general approach to developing evidence in the interviews was through the demonstration and socialisation of best practice. There were similarities to the story of the farrier's apprentice I told in Chapter 3 and to the flute players described by Cooke and Brown (2005), where knowledge was built in participants through a process that Cooke and Brown describe as a generative dance. That process has been described by, for example, Lave and Wenger (1991) and Leonard et al. (2013) as learning in a social context. Leonard et al. emphasise the power and importance of observational learning.

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#### Mini Case Study 8 *Starting A Role: The Importance Of Learning*

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During a conversation with an interim manager, the interim operations director of a core part of the UK energy infrastructure, we talked about the best way to change an organisation. Our conversation turned towards the capability in the business. I suggested that certain core capabilities were undeveloped. We talked about how they might be developed, and he emphasised that the best way forward was through organisational learning and development, accepting that the process takes longer than simply recruiting the skills into the business.

I said that my starting point was the operating model. I like to get hold of a copy and see what the organisation has intended to do. He agreed with that starting point and went on to talk about identifying processes that are ineffective. I suggested that it is possible to move down a level; processes are composed of services that must be performed, and those business services can be individually identified and heat-mapped to show where they are causing pain.

The approach interested him because decomposition to the business service level means that a number of processes may be improved at the same time. A business service is likely to be reused in a number of processes, and the approach explicitly focused on business problems, prioritising which should be dealt with first.

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Mini Case Study 8 shows one approach to developing an organisation. The interim manager referred to in the case study is not part of the panel interviewed for this paper, but he clearly sees the role of interim managers in organisational development. His task, in his role, is to effect transitional change across the entire organisation.

In either context the interim managers emphasise their role in transferring knowledge into the organisation. They discuss coaching, mentoring and delivering best practice. The theme that runs through the interviews is of interim managers, as line managers, developing their reports. All of the respondents note that this is a key responsibility of their role.

A theme across the interviews is the need to establish the direction of travel early on in an assignment and to ensure that the direction is shared. I relate this to the idea of building a vision in the minds of co-workers that they accept as plausible (Chapter 4). Managers achieve this goal by clearly communicating both the journey and the endpoint. In doing so, they develop a shared vision with their team.

In summary, the respondent cohort sees their role in the context of inspiring change within the organisations in which they work. They do not see this as simply a matter of bringing best practice with them but of creating an environment in which best practice can be readily and willingly adopted.

### 7.5 *Interim Managers as Consultants*

One of the recurring themes in my supervision meetings came about during a discussion between Lynette Harris and myself regarding whether interim managers were just consultants. This section is intended to address that discussion.

The role of the consultant needs to be explored first, as being a consultant means various things. I recognise in my change management work that I do process consultancy, and I recognise that approach in the descriptions of how the interview respondents approach their work. Process consulting is distinctly different from expert consulting. Maister (2003) proposes a three-level model of consultancy, where the top layer is occupied by firms, such as McKinsey, that work only at the strategic level, a middle layer of experienced “been there, done that” consultants, and a lower layer that has highly developed processes for delivery. The way in which interim managers discuss this issue is interesting and suggests that to the extent they are consultants, they fit within the middle layer.



The idea of interim managers as consultants sparked the greatest number of comments amongst the interim managers interviewed for this paper. The responses indicated a split between public and private sector practice. George is of the opinion that most consultants are selling lower risk, through structured methods, and so need to be cost/solution focused. That delivery focus means that consultants can only deal with cultural change at the conceptual level.

The consultant's methodological approach also fails when clients, George says, don't know what they want, which is common. Evidence to support that statement is in the tendency of interim managers to renegotiate assignment deliveries post entry.

Consultants struggle with the messy problem of client indecision and the absence of certainty. In contrast, interim managers deliver with and through the client's resource and, consequently, have a more intimate knowledge of the situation and an ability to be more flexible in their approach.

George's position is reinforced by Sue's comments that describe consultants as providing a product into the company, and interims as part of the business. Consultants, she suggests, provide a solution to be delivered, whereas interims provide a solution and implement it. "*Consultants do to; interims do with,*" she comments.

Charles's position is aligned with his specialisation as a procurement manager. He believes that typically, consultants are not well managed by clients, whereas interim managers are managed as direct reports within the existing management structure and process. That integration enables clients to manage a relationship with an interim in a better, more effective way than one with a consultant. He also comments that consultants tend to define their own work. They look for solutions that fit their offer. He contrasts this with the position of an interim manager, who works to resolve a problem identified by the client and within the overall direction of the client. This proposition needs to be reconciled with the more prevalent comments by respondents, which suggest a process of negotiation in the early days of the assignment. I see this in the context of the role as given and as taken (Krantz and Maltz, 1997).

Charles's major critique of consultants echoes George's concerns. Contrasting consultants and interim managers, Charles is critical both of the ability of clients to understand the

consultant's brief and the process by which consultants carry out their work. He observes that consultant partners only turn up on site occasionally—*"What's the value of strangers—not much?"*—and that, typically, consultancies flood work with junior consultants to maximise the profitability of the work: *"All too often, what's delivered is not what the client wants."*

It is interesting to note that the public sector seems to be different. Joan thinks that in the public sector, there is a blurring between the roles of consultants and interims and that consequently there is very little difference. At the time of our interview, six interim managers were putting in a computer system at her site. She notes that *"they could as easily be P.A. consultants"*. Simon recognises that the public sector and the private sector treat interim managers and consultants differently. He also believes that in the public sector, both have similar roles, but that it is wrong to lump the groups together in this way.

## 7.6            *The Public Sector*

The interim managers interviewed here, and for Tyrrell (2004a), who worked in the private sector were explicitly engaged, either in a project role or through a line role to deliver organisational change and development.

A counterpoint to the idea that interim managers are different from functional specialists may, however, be in the way in which the public sector uses temporary management. The sector tends towards the use of temporary managers as a flexible resource and to blur the difference between instrumental and functional resourcing.

Joan's comment is interesting, noting that she *"would like to talk about a difference between interim managers and temps, but it's difficult in the public sector where interim managers do operational roles"*. In that statement she implies that those operational roles are line roles. That implication carries a further implication that these roles are not transformational. During this part of Joan's interview, she notes a clear lack of opportunity in the public sector to contribute transformational skills in public sector assignments.

That issue cannot entirely be laid at the door of public sector's resilience to change. Simon, again with experience in the public sector, says that some so-called interim managers want to be permanent and behave in their roles as if they are permanent employees, which suggests an orientation to simple temporary management, whereby interim management is treated on the supply side as a route to a job and on the demand side as instrumental stopgapping.

Simon also refers to a government agency almost entirely staffed by interim managers in the long term, running on continuously extended assignments. “*But that’s not me*”, he says. He is anxious to distance himself from this view of interim management, where the use of contract management is used to defer or avoid the need to come to grips with the management needs of the organisation. According to Simon, the outcome arose at that particular firm because civil servants were unwilling to step into an agency role and the roles were not attractive to the permanent external market. Similar situations arise when, as in a utility in which I worked, there is no long-term view for the business. As a senior partner in a consultancy said to me, “*Nobody loves it*”. In fact, the firm had been sold a number of times, and nobody was coming to grips with its management need.

### 7.7 *Storytelling*

My work in knowledge management has given me a clear understanding of the power of stories as a knowledge management tool, and I deploy stories as a way of helping managers see what is possible. In my interviews with interim managers, I was anxious to discuss the role that stories play in their daily work. Typically, the respondents deployed stories within the engagement process to demonstrate expertise and found it difficult to see how this could be done otherwise. However, they refrained from, as one put it, using “*war stories*” in their assignments, preferring to rely on the imposition of best practice—but best practice is itself a story.

Best practice does not just arrive fully formed and ready to implement. It has been previously worked out in practice and recorded either publicly through publication or privately in a practitioner’s notebook. And like research, it is subject to a process of verification. Who is to say one practice is better than another? Nowadays, best practice is largely worked out by practitioners and is subject to a level of peer review (e.g., see [mike2.openmethodology.org](http://mike2.openmethodology.org) and [www.opengroup.org/togaf](http://www.opengroup.org/togaf)). It is Mode 2 knowledge, and is largely examinable. In that sense, things have improved from my early days in the industry, when help was always available through the Computer Information Exchange (CIX) but only by way of a UNIX command prompt, the use of which required learning a series of cryptic acronyms and plain-text communications. Within that limitation there was a community of practice that stretched across London and would respond to a cry for help.

The formulation of best practice has not addressed the need for tacit knowledge in assignments, which is difficult to examine and can only be developed in practice. I have the badges that say I am an expert in my field, but true expertise is developed in practice and is passed on through processes, for example, observational learning (Leonard et al., 2013) and the generative dance (Cooke et al., 2005).

### *7.8 Relationships and Networks*

The interviewees emphasised the importance of a close relationship with their sponsor, perhaps assisted by their lack of involvement in organisational politics, and the importance of their role in developing their client organisations. I took from the interviews an impression of people with deep functional skills who also have a high level of skills in general and in change management.

Interim managers are trusted by their sponsors precisely because in other circumstances, they would be either the peer or a direct report to their sponsor. They form part of the external peer group with whom Schein (2010) suggests senior management identify.

The narrative of interim management includes the idea that they are overqualified for their roles. That idea is normally attributed to Martin Woods, formerly of the interim agency BIE. It formed an important part of his agency's marketing position. But Woods meant that the interim had more experience than the role required. Pointing to the post-nominal letters on my CV, he once told me that I could delete them because nobody was interested in what qualifications I had. A client was concerned only with the interim's ability to do the job. The interim managers interviewed for this paper were overqualified for their assignment roles. Joan normally works at the director level but does assignments as a manager, and Charles notes that he considers himself two or three grades more senior than the role he currently inhabits. He has seen a willingness on the part of a chief executive to pay for experience and ability beyond that required by a role for short periods whilst a function is being realigned to business needs.

It's within the context of middle-up-down management—and not their seniority—that I have positioned interim management as middle management. Middle-up-down management (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) is effective because of the relationships middle managers have with both those they report to and those who report to them. In a Japanese context, *genchi*

*genbutsu* (Takeuchi et al., 2008) bypasses relationships because it is direct experience, but it's proposed here as a proxy relationship between the interim manager and his or her sponsor. As such, it is dependent upon the trust within that relationship, which might best be maintained by regular and frequent contact throughout the assignment.

All of the interim managers interviewed for this paper are part of their sponsors' task-focused network. All respondents emphasise the importance of having regular and easy access to their sponsor, typically the chief executive, but delivering their work through interaction lower down in the organisation. They are a node on their sponsor's operational network. I see this bridging function between "C" level and middle management to be an important aspect of interim management and analogous to both Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) middle-up-down management process and the Japanese idea of *genchi genbutsu*.

My experience and the evidence of the experience of the interim managers interviewed are that interim managers sit within a manager's personal network. Their experience across assignments provides a context in which they can discuss and advise their sponsor and, through those discussions, help the personal development of their sponsor in the way described by Ibarra and Hunter (2007). In that role, they can guide their sponsors into something that can be achieved given the available resources and context of the proposal.

They can do so because they have a depth of experience. All of the interim managers interviewed here and for (Tyrrell, 2004a) have more than a decade of experience in interim management and a career in senior management before that. They were, as discussed, over-qualified for their roles in the sense that the roles being performed might be one or two organisational levels below what their seniority as managers might suggest. As managers they have obvious presence, and from an organisational perspective, they are apolitical.

### *7.9 Interim Managers Are Apolitical*

Interim managers have an interesting relationship with organisational politics. Those interviewed here and for Tyrrell (2004a) claim not to have an agenda in the mainstream of organisational politics. This lack of long-term interest in the company was made clear to me when on an assignment and following a morning discussing the organisational implications of integrating an acquired business, in which senior managers had competing interests in what might be their "bit", the CEO turned to me and said: "*You're an independent. What do you*

*think?”* Steve reported a similar situation when he was invited to give his view at a meeting because it was *“a fresh perspective”*.

Rising above the general run of politics is not the same as being unaware of and uninvolved in politics. The consensus amongst the panel is that this involvement should be at the level that enables the project to be delivered. Shelia explains that one should not take positions but instead focus on the project and outcomes and get the team to focus on the problems. She maintains a firm view on general organisational politics: *“walk through them”*, but pay attention to politics and use them to gain advantage in dealing with people who have the power and the ability to effect change. Charles takes a similar stand. He indicates that he prefers to keep away from politics but that working within a management team makes this difficult. He emphasises the need to get things done despite the politics—that the political game is for permanent managers. He notes that internal politicking is counterproductive, and although he has seen interim managers engage in it, they had been in the role for three to five years and were really just expensive employees.

Edward, who I have worked with on a number of assignments, is openly political. His attitude toward his assignments is summarised in Tyrrell (2004), where he said:

*“[I]f you hire an interim, you’re getting an individual who should pride himself on his, or her, personal commitment to professionalism, loyalty to you as an employer of their services, not an employer per se. Somebody who’s going to tell the truth, somebody who’s going to deliver what you want to be delivered if it’s deliverable. If it’s not deliverable, who’s actually going to say you are wasting your time and money.”*

I have participated in assignments where Edward’s approach to delivery has been observably political, and there is perhaps an honesty in that approach that most interims struggle to recognise. After all, traditional change management is, in general terms, the political act of imposing the will of one individual or group on another.

Reflecting on the detail of the interviews, it is evident that interim managers generally try to keep a distance from the political environment of their client organisations, except to the extent necessary to enable success in their assignment activity. As such, they can be distinguished from their permanent colleagues by their short-term political objectives.

### 7.10 *Empathy*

Another important part of my practice, which was not fully developed in the interviews with interim managers, is the need to build empathy. I relate this to the dialogue required in process consulting. Respondents acknowledge a need to know and understand their sponsor's needs but did not speak of a need to do so at other levels in the organisation. It may be that, as a designer, this need is unique to me and that it suggests an agenda for future research.

### 7.11 *Summary and Conclusions*

The overall impression from these interviews confirms the conclusions from my earlier work (Tyrrell, 2004a; Tyrrell, 2006) that interim managers are predominantly involved in change management, but it is abundantly evident in the interviews that much of that change is effected at the individual level through the development of individuals within the organisation.

Goss and Bridson's (1998) hypothesis is that interim management can be modelled through three broad organisational stereotypes: the flexible firm, the learning organisation, and the networked firm. The roles of interim management described in this chapter obviously do not support the flexible firm agenda. There is limited support for the concept of the networked firm to the extent that interims form part of the senior management team's network, and clear support for the role of interim managers in developing their client organisations.

There is scope for further research in the public sector, where a different engagement model appears to exist.

As a practising interim manager, the outcome from the interviews did not come as a surprise to me. In general, the respondents spoke of an approach to interim management that I understand and follow. However, two things stand out from the interviews, not because of their uniqueness but for the force with which the points were made: the commitment to developing client organisations and the importance of being able to network at an executive level. Both aspects are attributes of the status of the respondents as senior managers brought in frequently by the chief executive to deal with a problem, rather than as stopgap resources brought in to fill a gap in the line.

The interim management market appears to consist of a tight, compact group of senior managers who provide a range of services at a senior level. The agents believe that employment of an interim should be justifiable on a costed business case. In common with the interim managers interviewed, the agents identify a key benefit of interim management as the development of the client's staff.



## Chapter 8: What Does This Mean In Practice?

### *8.1 Introduction*

A narrative has three elements (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004)—chronicle, mimesis and plot. The chronicle is the time line through the story, the mimesis the combination of theory with field experience and the plot the story to be told. Describing the structure in this way sounds tidy and logical but real stories do not work like that. A story teller develops his story through a labyrinth of twists, turns and backtracking, always heading in a general direction but lingering at particular point to make a point, perhaps by telling a subsidiary story, to build an empathetic picture in the readers' mind.

Autoethnography has a number of functions. As a recollection it provides a perspective which recaptures and reconceptualises the self (Zohar and Marshall cited in Etherington, 2004, p. 146). Stories are told for different purposes for different audiences and at different times. Autoethnographic stories give witness to participation in past events (Franks (1995) cited in Etherington, 2004, p. 146–147). As “truth” the stories represent an interpretation (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 83–84), even when compiled from field notes. The process of review and the development of narrative involves not just the field notes, but the recollections which reading them provokes and the knowledge which has been acquired in the intervening period (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 83).

My story has a number of purposes. It provides a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the working life of an interim manager. It shows my practice as an interim manager and how I developed my approach to that practice. It expresses my values, relates practice to theory, lays the foundation for a comparison of practice in the following chapter, and shows my development as a narrative researcher. As a story it is burdened with purpose.

The story has three strands. The first is my development in practice. The second, the development of particular skills in implementing management vision and developing target operating models, and bring those activities together. The third stand is the life cycle of a typical assignment. The stages in an assignment closely correlate to the research roles described by Jankowicz (2005). An interim manager gains entry negotiates the role, delivers

and exits. That life cycle is the framework of this chapter, but I have added a pre-entry stage to cover the interim managers—agent relationship, and excluded exit.

The mimesis combines theory with field experience (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004). The theory may be technical rational knowledge but it is also Scott et al.'s (2004) Mode 2 and 3 knowledge. Most interim managers have formal professional and managerial qualifications, but the characteristics of an interim manager described in the introduction suggest a deep knowledge of their practice area, good judgement and smart interpretations of situations. They display the characteristics, and, possibly the limitations, of Leonard and Swaps' (2004) deep smarts – see Chapter 2.

Mode 3 (Scott et al., 2004) knowledge reflects a new epistemology which values knowledge developed and rooted in practice (Winter and Burroughs, 1989). I use the plot, the final element of the narrative to show how I came to know practice. The core of the plot is the *How* project but my story is not about that project; it is about my development.

## *8.2 Pre-Entry: Getting an assignment.*

Many Interims get their assignments through their personal network, as a colleague put it, they are the “mates of the CEO”, but nearly half of the assignments are obtained through agencies. As a consultant my ratio of marketing days to fee-earning days favoured marketing. As an Interim the marketing effort is carried out by the Agents. Networking is still necessary as a successful interim depends on it, but social media makes the process of staying in touch with colleagues and agents easier and something which can be combined with work.

A curriculum vitae (CV) is needed to get an assignment. A CV is the story of the Interim as the Interim wishes it to be told. It narrates the performed roles (Goffman, 1990, 1997) of the interim in the public space of Luft and Ingham's (1955) Johari window. Its role is to open doors, one to agents and the other to potential clients.

Interim CVs differ from the CVs of conventional jobseekers. The conventional wisdom is a CV is no longer than two pages. Typically an interim manager's CV is four or more pages long. A redacted copy of mine is in Appendix A. It combines a skill-based presentation and a sequential description of roles undertaken, by client name and role for jobs more than ten years old, and with a detailed description of the roles, achievements and client benefits for newer roles.

I have introduced the magic circle in Chapter five. Most agents have an extensive list of potential interim managers but their working “stable”, those regularly placed on assignment, is relatively small. They trust this inner circle of Interims to deliver services to the standard they require. This represents the Catch 22 situation (Heller, 1996) for new market entrants as a track record of successful assignments is required to get the next assignment. My first assignment was through a personal connection and my second through an IT agency which needed to fill a requirement for a change manager. With two assignments on my CV I had applied to the leading Interim Management Agency in the UK, and was invited to interview by Martin Wood. Martin is a legend in the interim market. He was a pioneer in the development of the UK market. Martin and I got on well together, and a week or so later he called me back to discuss an assignment.

Martin briefly discussed the assignment and then left me to write half a page or so about why my experience makes me suitable for the work. In doing so I extended the presentation of self as represented on my CV in the public space of the Johari window (Luft and Ingham, 1955). The extension is a precursor to the role enactment at the interview with the client and subsequently within the role. The suitability document and the CV are key promotional tools for the role.

As my relationship with the agency developed I no longer had to come to the office for this purpose. Role briefs were discussed on the telephone and brief and suitability document exchanged by email.

Other agents follow this model with variations; a recent trend is to ask for a “motivational letter” setting out why the role was attractive. This kind of letter indicates a need to pitch for work which is contrary to my understanding of the interim management ethos as discussed with Martin. His view was that capability was a given and that the interview process between the interim and the client was to test personal chemistry, and either might walk away from the role at that stage.

Some agents look for a degree of CV “tailoring” precisely meeting the assignment brief. A level of integrity is required as emphasising particular skills and experience is quite a different matter to “creative” CV writing. A further check on creativity is the agents desire to successfully fulfil the brief in a way that enhances its reputation and encourages a future flow of work.

The relationship between agent and interim can be modelled as a network, where the agent sources an assignment from his network which is resourced from a pool of interim managers who the agent trusts. Amongst Interim Managers it is common to hear that you are only as good as your last assignment. Trust, once lost, is difficult to recover. Network relationships largely offset the problem of validation inherent in the occupational labour market (Marsden, 2003) where the absence of formal professional structures makes it difficult to gauge the quality of a service.

Once engaged by one agent getting assignments from other becomes easier. The interim agency market is relatively small and individual agents know each other and move between agencies. A track record with one agency suggests the interim is a valuable resource and one which other agencies may want to use. In my case working for Martin and BIE was a major endorsement and opened doors to other agents.

Clients rely on the agent's selection process. Typically an agent sends only well-fitting CVs in response to a brief. On occasions, but rarely in the current climate, an agent might only offer one CV. In the case of the assignment which contained *How* the late Stuart Cain, of BIE, did not have an assignment brief but asked me to meet a Director of a company to discuss the issues he was facing. We discussed them over coffee and our meeting extended to the greater part of the afternoon. At the end of the meeting he invited me to start a three-month assignment on the following Monday. This assignment extended to eighteen months and is the context for *how*.

### 8.3 Entry

Most people have a feeling of apprehension on the first day of a new job. A new job involves meeting new people, establishing new relationships, perhaps learning new skills and certainly new processes. In all of these things there is a need for the newcomer to prove oneself. These activities require a number of interpersonal skills but "first days" are something that most people do infrequently.

To an interim manager a "first day" happens relatively frequently, and the social context is different. The interim enters an organisation with a reputation as an expert, and typically with the high level sponsorship of the CEO or another senior executive. If anything it is the new colleagues who face a greater uncertainty. The first few days of an assignment is the time for

roles to be constructed and enacted, when the interim affirms his expertise and approach and colleagues decide their position in relation to the newcomer.

At this time I find it better to listen rather than talk. Schein's (2013) humble enquiry is a useful approach to getting people to share their industry recipe (Spender, 1989) and organisational domain knowledge and their understanding of the issues to be addressed. The objective is to move quickly from conversation to a shared dialogue (Schein, 1999) and an empathetic (Bennett, 1998) understanding of each other's knowledge and skills, our joint understanding of the problem and the solution options. Through this process we extend our presentation in Room 1 and develop a view of each other in room 2 (in each case referring to Luft and Ingham, 1955 Johari window). The process involves sensemaking (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005) of each other, of the knowledge in the group, and what we each bring to the work. The approach builds a community of practice (Wenger, 2000; Wenger et al., 2002) and brings all of the talent to the issues.

Rumelt (2011) writes of his and F.W. Taylor's experience, of allowing senior managers an opportunity to speak about the issues they must deal with. He notes that the process of talking about their issues the senior resolves them without the intervention of the consultant. A recent meeting reminded me of this. I bumped into an old colleague, now the CIO of a major utility, at a conference. He introduced me to his colleague as the "*guy who taught him all he knew*". In doing so he significantly overstated my role in his development. My only contribution was to allow him space for reflexivity, in which he talked through how he intended to approach the integration of one company into another. I had previously done this kind of work and might reasonably have directed the process as an expert, but in that expert role I limit my colleague's learning. As transition director my appropriate behaviour was to enable the sharing of ideas and to facilitate decision making. Hersey and Blanchard's (1993) participatory management, during the period in which my colleague appeared able but needed space to develop his ideas, and to stand back, to delegate, when he had clarified those ideas and was ready to implement them.

There can be a feeling of frustration in watching someone find a solution for something where you already have an answer. The temptation is to reach over and get on with it, and I tended to do that as my children grew up. When something was broken I fixed it rather than, as my father did for me, help them to fix it. However well-intentioned, my intervention took

away the opportunity to develop *know-how* in the way illustrated in Mini Case Study 3 and by Cooke and Brown's (2005) generative dance.

My sense of satisfaction comes when others are able to achieve. It is the feeling one gets in a tutorial where you have been pushing a weigh-up hill and suddenly the load lightens as understanding spreads through the room and the students take over the elaboration of the idea.

An outcome of the approach described is that it is not unusual to be told at the end of a meeting of an early assignment, in which I have done little more than listen, that the manager concerned is looking forward to learning from me, and to receive thanks at the end of an assignment for the contribution I made to their knowledge (Exhibit 9).

At other times it may be necessary to be directive but direction needs careful thought. Is inaction a result of inability or insecurity? Either may reduce motivation, or there may just be an unwillingness to proceed. Rumelt (2011) refers to F.W Taylors' "next step" approach, and I find that idea useful. My thinking owes much to the senior partner of a law firm where I was employed as a newly qualified solicitor. He had found me in a state of considerable uncertainty about a case. I told him that I couldn't see the first step. His advice was to "*Do something boy, get it moving. Once it is moving it will be easier to change its direction*". That advice has stayed with me over the years. When a problem seems impossible, don't try and solve it but do something to change it slightly. List what can be done and the next step for each item on the list.

The context of my description of the initial assignment engagement is the process of a professional doctorate. That process sensitises me to various approaches to research. I identify in my description the core processes of Moustakas' (1990) heuristic enquiry, which include getting inside the problem, critical self-dialogue, how does my explicit and tacit knowledge apply to the problem, and the role of intuition, which I describe in Chapter 6 as adductive reasoning.

I continue with these thoughts as I continue to describe the cycle of an assignment.

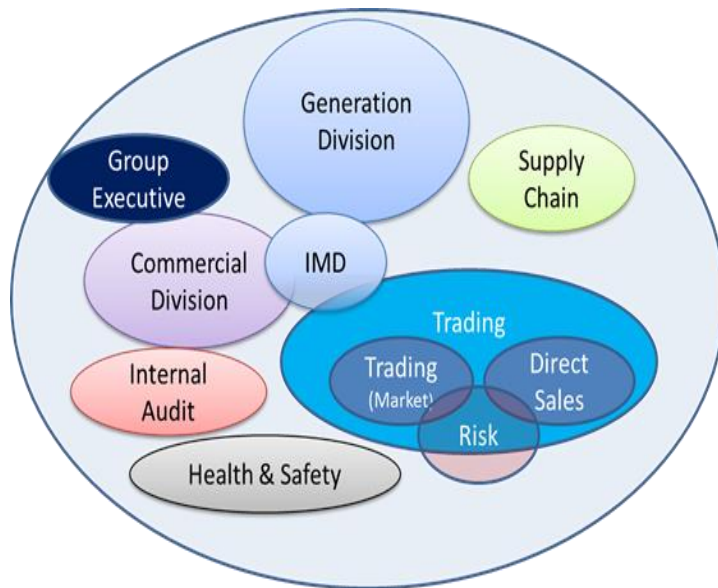
#### *8.4 Performance*

In the normal flow of an assignment, an interim may deliver a number of projects or work packages. This project-based view of service delivery is typical of the working styles of interim managers. Interim managers are often asked to deal with complex and messy problems that are often not properly understood by the management team that owns them, and interim managers tend to renegotiate their terms of reference in the early weeks of an assignment (Tyrrell 2004a). This reflects a need to reframe the issues to be addressed following the interim's preliminary assessment.

Successful delivery involves identifying the blocks of activity that contribute to the overall direction of travel but that can be completed as a piece of discrete work. The process is not dissimilar to the practice adopted by hairdressers when dealing with unruly hair. That's a reasonable description of my hair. I am an infrequent attendee at my local hairdressing college. The sight of my thick, curly and often overgrown hair is daunting to new students, but the instructors get them to break the problem down into sections—side, back, crown—and to focus on each section and its relationship with its neighbour.

Although this is a reductionist approach, the intension is to provide a holistic solution. My early work in system theory played a role in developing my thinking. Just as Cambridge was founded by a group of disgruntled academics from Oxford, my MBA comes from a business school founded by members of the technology faculty crossing the campus. The resulting, continuing, tension between the technology and business schools is, in my judgement, unhelpful, but I studied for my MBA at a point in the development of the schools when system thinking played a major role in the curriculum.

Figure 23 A PowerCo System Map from the Perspective of an Interim Manager of Trading



A consequence of a systems approach is that I represent relationships and issues in diagrams. Figure 23 is a system map I prepared in the first week of an assignment. These diagrams are typically sketches in notebooks. This diagram was redrawn for a presentation.

The diagram shows the relationship and the potential for

identity dynamics (Chapter 3) and micro-politics. Both were major issues in the assignment and required extensive back staging (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992) to manage. Ultimately, this activity detracted from the success of the assignment.

It is good system practice to identify the perspective from which a diagram is prepared. Figure 23 is drawn from the perspective of an interim manager who has just started an assignment in the organisation described and who is primarily concerned with work in trading and retail (noted as direct sales on the diagram). Someone with a different perspective, such as a risk specialist, might develop an entirely different mapping.

The context for the discussion of this part of my work at PowerCo is the tension between two management groups. One ran the Information Management Department (IMD) and the other the Trading Division. Each group had different, but highly defined, formal group identities.

Trading did more than energy trading. It was the route to market for all the energy produced by the Generating Division. It had two sub-groups, Trading (in wholesale energy) and Retail (in the business-to-business sector). Taken year on year, each sub-group had much the same turnover. Retail was the larger group by number of employees, but Trading dominated management thinking and organisational culture. Traders were elite and disproportionately represented on the management team, and their views were dominant. Their status can be inferred from the title to the change programme that I discuss later, “Trader of Choice”.



Trading's self-image was at level one in the organisation, the same level as the Generation business whose output it marketed. It viewed IMD as a service department at the same organisational level as Trading's Information Systems Group (Trading IS). IMD did not share this viewpoint. Its image of itself and trading was as service divisions, primarily for Generation. That viewpoint put IMD and Trading at level two, and Trading IS at level three. IMD reasoned that trading IS was functionally the same as its primary activity and should be part of IMD.

Trading's vision was to be Trader of Choice. The vision involved a focus on commercial energy trading rather than its traditional role as a route to market for Generation. "Trader of Choice" was heavily overlaid with symbolism. It meant that other counterparties would want to deal with Trading. It was intended to represent excellence in all the activities within Trading, but particularly at the Trading Desk and the services that support those activities. Retail, as the poor relation, was swept up in the programme to improve service delivery.

Stepping back from the powerful influence of Trader of Choice and asking why PowerCo trades energy provokes varied answers from around the Group. For Trading, its activity was a way of maximising the return on investment on generation assets. For Generation, trading was a matter of risk management that enabled gaps in production schedules to be managed. With some justification, IMD pointed out that Trading's ambition was not Group's ambition. It thought its own ambition aligned more with Group values, which embraced safety, security and careful, almost parsimonious, management of assets. IMD's vision was to become the information systems solution provider for the Group. Its primary orientation was towards Generation, where change was rare but glacial when it occurred. That relation was ingrained in IMD's culture and organisation. Change to systems was slow and bureaucratic.

IMD's ambition positioned it as the information service provider. Implicitly, that meant it should absorb the Trading IS Group. The prospect alarmed Trading's senior management. They were aware of the different cultures within PowerCo and of the difficulties they had in managing across internal divisions. Their self-image was of a dynamic, market-facing organisation shackled to a slow, risk-averse information system provider. Their strategy required an agile IS function that enabled it to respond quickly to market changes. Both Divisions were running change programmes. Trading's initial programme was conceived and delivered by another interim manager. Its central theme was a sporting metaphor that emphasised the ideas of excellence, personal best and team work. IMD's programme used an

RAF metaphor and, on the face, appeared to have objectives, but the implementation was at the process and system levels. The espoused objectives of increased customer responsiveness differed from the objectives in practice, which concentrated on formalising how things should be done and process compliance. Categorising those metaphors (following Marshak, 1993, as cited in Schein, 1999, p. 57), both had a sociological theme through which roles, norms and culture were addressed, but the emphasis at IMD was on reengineering and fixing a problem (a machine metaphor), and in Trading on building new relationships and moving the business into new activities (combining travel and construction metaphors).

The distinction between metaphors frames the approach to a project. A machine metaphor focuses on what is wrong. An extension of this mindset is that there is a need for a cure—the medical metaphor of cure, inoculate, cut and excise (Schein, 1999, p. 57). The approach is explicitly critical and is frequently accompanied by an outside expert “applying” a solution. A traveller or construction metaphor involves consideration of potential, future goals and how they might be achieved. Here, one might also think of an agricultural (although I prefer horticultural) metaphor of grow, regenerate, bear fruit and harvest (Schein, 1999, p. 57).

Trading was not immune to a machine mindset. Its approach to dealing with its retail arm and Trading IS followed that approach. In the case study “Fire the IT Department”, I was given a machine metaphor that I reframed into a travel metaphor.

The tensions between Trading and IMD played out at many levels. In an attempt to gain better understanding, I worked with a group of middle managers to model the relationships.

The managers were reluctant to think of their organisation in terms of relationships, but I saw the major departments, the technology and the perception of internal capability, as actants (Latour, 2005), and we came away from the exercise with a number of powerful insights. We identified the nuclear fleet as a powerful actant that influenced behaviour. For example, the safety culture pervades the entire group and not just those parts concerned with nuclear power and heavy engineering. Its long investment lifecycles framed investment thinking. The two change programmes were intended to be, and were, albeit in different ways, actants that affected behaviour. Another set of actants were the interdepartmental relationships. IMD was a service group within the Finance and Commercial Group. Its major customer was Generation. IMD’s culture and outlook was closely attuned to those relationships. Recalling Latour (1986), power should not be considered from the context of the powerful, but from the

effect it has on those in proximity to it. In that sense both Commercial and Generation held considerable sway in how IMD conducted itself.

Trader of Choice was a powerful actant in the trading community but significantly less so in the business-to-business retail area. More importantly, it gained no traction in IMD, which provided key services to Trading.

To IMD Trader of Choice involved an investment for which Trading had Capex but that would involve the use of resources controlled by IMD and impose a long-term cost on IMD, raising its operating costs at a time when it was committed to cost reduction. Under these circumstances, IMD declined to accept the concept of Trader of Choice and did only the bare minimum to support it. Of course this resistance was not obvious or directly stated; nonetheless, it manifested itself in processes and procedures that implemented (Argyris, 1986, p.543) organisational defence:

- *“Design a message that is inconsistent.*
- *“Act as if the message is not inconsistent.*
- *“Make the inconsistency in the message and the act so that there is no inconsistency undiscussable.*
- *“Make the undiscussability of the undiscussable also undiscussable.”*

The four rules, alone or in conjunction with each other, could be found throughout the relationship in PowerCo between Routes and IMD. For example, Routes must comply with IMD's project methodology to ensure speedy delivery of the projects, but that process is bureaucratic, long winded and, in fact, designed to choke IMD to manage demand in its resource profile.

Amongst all this tension was the problem of IS Trading and IMD's desire to take it over.

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#### *Mini Case Study 9 Fire the IT Department*

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My initial assignment was to work with Trading IS. The role as given (Krantz and Maltz, 1997) was summarised in a problem statement provided to me: IT does not work. Pushing deeper, I found that IS was not providing the support the business needed; it was unresponsive to changing business needs, unreliable and, consequently, was losing business opportunity. In the words of my sponsor, *“I don't want to start my laptop at a meeting and feel that I'm starting up a power station”*. There was a real feeling of

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frustration in the next part of the brief. *“I want you to fire all those IT people and get me a team that can meet my needs”*.

In speaking with the Trading IS team, its members seemed to me, in the main, to be very knowledgeable about their job and the trading business. There were exceptions and some capability gaps, but on the whole the group was typical of many IS Groups. It was led by an exceptionally talented individual (now a CIO) who had formed a team of able direct reports. Its problem was twofold: it seemed unable to find a “voice” at the top table, and it relied heavily on IMD for service provision. This was a constant source of frustration and conflict between IMD and Trading. Generally, day-to-day operations went very well, but tempers frayed when things went wrong, particularly in relation to time to fix. Trading is very time sensitive, and system changes, which involved projects on both sides of the divide, were very difficult.

I am a qualified investor-in-people advisor. My approach was first to assess the Group by working with its manager and analysing with him the perception of the group’s shortcomings. Based on that analysis, I would produce an action plan that showed how those perceptions might be addressed, for they were largely perceived rather than actual shortcomings, and a plan to show how any actual capability deficiencies would be dealt with through recruitment and training.

At that stage, I was working at the level of the machine metaphor (Schein, 1999), which implies an approach to fix and rebuild. In general, I saw no reason to think in terms of Schein’s medical metaphor, which implies a need to cure, inoculate, cut and excise (Schein, 1999, p. 57) at the group level, although there were individuals who were clearly in the wrong role. I worked with those individuals to help them better define their career aspirations. This is not a euphuism for capability management. The technique involves appreciative enquiry, which concentrates on what the individual is good at rather than focusing on identified shortcomings. A notable success in this area is an individual who was working as a service manager, and failing in that role. He relocated into an academic institution and is now working successfully in the knowledge management field.

My intention for the group was to quickly move to a point where a future could be envisioned; this builds the potential of the group. This approach emphasises the nurturing and development needed to harness the creative abilities in the group.

I did not fire the IS Group. Instead, we built a convincing strategy and operating model. On the way we found the voice, which meant that the Group was listened to and respected by the senior management team.

The process, which was built in the earlier work I had done at Netco, involved the development of a target operating model for the group. The development of the model involved the full range of inquiry (Reason and Torbert, 2001). There was a first-person inquiry for each individual (e.g., what I know about my function), a second-person inquiry, which relates to fitness for purposes of capability in the context of stakeholder requirements and, most importantly, at the end of the exercise, a third-person inquiry in

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the form of a feedback presentation led by the manager and his direct reports to the senior management team. This presentation showed technical competence, business awareness and pride in what they do.

From a process consultant's perspective, success may involve intervention at the individual, interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup levels. In this case work was done at each level. The core work was at the intragroup level, where working groups were brought together to develop their vision of what was required and a roadmap by which it would be achieved. The individual-level work largely followed the situational leadership model described in Chapter 3, but it also included career counselling and the creation of individual development plans.

The intergroup work involved IMD, and that was not successful.

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In working to resolve the position between Trading and IMD, it became clear that there was a lot of talking and very little listening. There was an urgent need to move the exchanges from conversation to dialogue in the way described Section 3.6. The Shannon and Weaver (1963) model of machine communications has currency in the knowledge management field because of its simplicity. The transmitted message has no intrinsic meaning. The message is an instruction enabling the receiver to select meaning from an internalised list of conceptual schema (Von Glasersfeld, 1996, p. 138), and it is through that schema that meaning is created. Bennett's (1998) discussion of intercultural meaning involves the development of empathy, which is created through dialogue, and dialogue is a basic building block of process consulting (Schein, 2013).

Our starting point was at the most basic level of communication. PowerPoint decks were exchanged, showing possible realignments of the divisional boundaries and the impact of the change. Meetings were held and reports prepared, but the work was superficial. Nobody was prepared to make the undiscussable discussable (Argyris, 1986) by addressing how the different business rhythms—Trading's need for agility, and IMD's desire to serve generation with the economic provision of the IS systems—could be accommodated. Without that level of honest appreciation, the problem remained insoluble. The managers of both Trading and IMD escalated their ever-growing dispute through the corporate hierarchy with little effect. Puzzled corporate directors intervened, listened, suggested the need for mutual cooperation and walked away. But that cooperation did not happen. In reality, members of management from both divisions were locked into an image of "their" organisation, and those images were

contained by behavioural norms within their part of the group and their perception of how they ought to behave within the network of actants in which they were operating.

The extensive boundary systems for control (Simons, 1995)—beliefs, values, behavioural standards and a consistent plan of activity—could be modelled in the Ashridge mission model (Campbell and Yeung, 2004), but the resulting missions were in conflict, resulting in a messy problem.

PowerCo's structure was the result of a deliberate design decision made by the existing manager's predecessors. That structure provided an institutional framework within which cultural values and norms of behaviour could grow. That did not happen in isolation but in reaction to the stimuli that each division faced. Trading operated and reacted in a trading environment that was a dominant influence in developing its organisational culture and the roles its management team created for itself. In contrast, the dominant institutional pressure upon IMD was from the Generation Division and the need to provide support services for a business that planned in forty-year lifecycles. As a result, IMD adopted a conservative, risk-averse culture.

I was unable to find a viable system model that accommodated the conflicting requirements of Trading and IMD. In many respects, I became a symbol for IMD's frustration with Trading, as my role cast me as the advocate of Trading IS aspirations. Becoming entangled in the arguments reduced my effectiveness in finding a resolution, and the conflict continued after my assignment finished.

There is a question in my mind if my approach to organisational change was effective under these circumstances. Burnes (2008, p. 346) describes the shortfall of an organisational development approach at the wider organisational level, and Schein (1999, p. 67) suggests that modifying the relationship between groups may have to take place at the system level, by effectively redefining the relationship or by working with the individual senior managers. I do not see these as distinct approaches because the system intervention requires the support of senior management. In fact, on another assignment a similar problem was effectively, if uncomfortably, addressed by a direction from the corner office. On my current assignment, where I am faced with a similar situation, I am trying a third way. I have the advantage of being accepted by both groups as someone who can help. Not being an advocate of one or another solution is important. In that boundary-spanning role, I encourage the development of

points of view for intergroup discussion and through that discussion develop mutual understanding of each other's interests and concerns, and of the various benefits and disadvantages in each solution. We are making slow progress. The approach is time-consuming, but my public-sector client is keen to get it right. It may be that the approach would not find traction in the private sector because of the time required for implementation. It is to be noted that the soft-system approach (Checkland and Scholes, 1990; Checkland and Poulter, 2006), which has a similar profile, was developed in the public sector.

Although the intergroup work at PowerCo was problematic, the intragroup work with Trading IS was successful. I outline the context of this work in Mini Case Study 9. A deliverable was the development and implementation of a target-operating model that emphasised service delivery to Trading within the known constraints of the wider system. In the development of that operating model and its presentation to Trading's senior management team, the colleagues concerned demonstrated their depth of skill and their understanding of the requirements of the business.

My approach to messy problems in organisations is similar. My current assignment includes

Figure 24 The Relationship Between Strategy and Structure



development of the operating model for an information management department. I am at the start of the exercise, and the assignment as taken has yet to be finalised. As I noted earlier, I am dealing with the cross-boundary issue, but I do have a working model, a vision, of what the outcome might be, which I have illustrated below.

I didn't just come to that framework. Although simple in itself, it represents more than a decade of learning and thinking about how strategy

should be delivered in organisations.

The task, as described on entry to the assignment, is to develop a strategy for the IM Group. The problem, in my view, is that there are very many strategies, where strategy is a noun, represented in any number of documents, but there is a question about the linkage between



those strategies and the wider needs of the business. It is difficult to see how those strategies, as nouns, link to the strategy, a verb, for implementation.

Conceptually, a strategy is both a design and a process. A traditional way that enterprise architects represent an organisational typology, which is the first step in formulating a delivery plan, is through the Zachman (1987) framework, but even in a readable A3 format, the framework is difficult for the non-architect to understand and use. For that reason, I use a simplified framework to assist colleagues in focussing on the key issues.

Figure 25 Linking Strategy to Operations



Referring to colleagues is intentional. Interim managers differ from typical consultants, or at least the majority of consultants I have encountered on assignments, because they deliver through the company's own resources. Consultants deploy a team to effect organisational change. Interim managers have to work with the colleagues who are already in post. Their role is to

deliver their objective using their expertise through leadership and, inevitably, the development of the people who work with them.

There is a time in an assignment when the discourse ceases to be an outside-in discussion, where the possessive pronouns—my, your, his, hers, their—give way to we and our. The change represents the step change from conversation to dialogue and the integration of interim management into the group.

A developmental role for an interim manager might be explicitly stated in the assignment. For example, I had a role to support a newly appointed CIO in his transition from manager in the business to manager of information systems. Even if not explicitly stated, a developmental role is always part of interim management. Skill transfer is necessary to progress the assignment. In a recent discussion with an interim management agent, he emphasised the importance of this aspect in winning assignments. Although now dormant



because of a change of management within the agency concerned, I was asked by an agency a year or so ago to set up a research project to investigate the organisational benefits of using interim managers in which I engaged professional academics from Nottingham Business School.

Another role of interim managers is the assessment of individuals and teams. Charles addressed this in his interview in the previous Chapter, when he placed it in the context of the exam question, “*should this individual be promoted?*” That’s not an unusual assignment, and it’s one that I have faced on a number of occasions.

In my current assignment, I am working with colleagues to define a strategy. I differentiate between strategy as a noun and strategy as a verb. This way of thinking about strategy, the grammar of strategy, came to me following a tutorial in which I was developing the resource-based view of strategy. Students have difficulty in distinguishing between resources and capabilities, and as a group we were categorising resources and capabilities in a case study. As the discussion progressed, a student noted that resources tend to be nouns and capabilities verbs. Reflection has pushed this simple idea into other areas of strategy.

Figure 26 Turning Resources into Capabilities (Grant, 2002)



Strategy, as a verb, is a process through which resources are articulated into capabilities via a value chain or net to produce an outcome. Grant’s (2002) resources and capabilities framework goes some way to reflecting this idea, but the concept is better expressed by substituting a value chain (e.g.,

see Porter, 1985) for Grant’s strategy block. It is the value chain rather than the strategy that addresses key success factors in a way that creates a competitive advantage. The strategy is the process through which the value chain is formulated (strategy as a noun) and implemented (strategy as a verb) and should sit outside the model.

Asking the question “how?” was an exercise in strategic implementation. It came about through a strategic question: how do we deliver value to the business in the context of

significant investment in implementing an IS strategy? Sean mentioned a similar problem in his interview for this paper. He said that the problem was always to get the necessary cultural change to enable the benefits of the investment to flow.

My approach to *how* represents an accumulation of experience across a number of projects, some of which I refer to in this paper, but my starting point was a simple two-page presentation that I used in a one-on-one meeting with my sponsor, the trading director.

I asked for the meeting because I was concerned that the considerable investment in the technology that I was managing would not bring the expected benefits in a business change project. The aim of the existing “cultural” change project, Trader of Choice, was to align the staff with the vision for the business. That programme was under the control of another interim manager, a communications specialist, but it seemed to me that getting people to change their values was not the same thing as helping people to understand what they must actually do to deliver change in their area. During the meeting, I thought, but did not voice, that getting people involved in the design of their work would commit them to that design and its output. My feeling was that the resulting engagement with the objectives and the design to achieve those objectives would be a major contributor to the cultural change programme.

Reflecting back, the argument that a self-developed change programme would bind the developers into the programme is a powerful one. I did not make the argument at the time, as the internal discourse of management was rooted in managerialism (e.g., see Watson, 2006). Managers were seen as experts who directed what and how things were done. My “touchy, lovey, feeling” style of management, as described by the trading director, resulted in some gentle teasing by him and other members of the senior management team who followed his lead.

My strength was that I was perceived as an expert in organisational design. My recommendation, couched in the language of expertise, was that there was a missing element in the change strategy. The board had agreed to the investment in technology and funding for the cultural change programme, but defining a new operating model was unfunded. To create it required work with and through middle management. I argued for a process to maximise the release of the planned benefit whilst working within the existing budgetary constraints.

My experience as an interim manager of giving effect to corporate vision suggests that managerial visions are either of the informing strategy kind or require submission to a set of corporate values prescribed by senior management. Inevitably, they become both, but in either case people do not get out of the trenches to follow them. Unconstrained vision is the outcome of senior management strategy nowadays. The extended and line management teams typically have a vision of the future for their part of the business, but it is constrained by their perception of what's possible.

My typical assignment is to deliver the unconstrained vision of senior management. To do so, I must work with the senior management team to help them understand real as opposed to perceived constraints and with the extended management team and line managers to help them build in their minds a vision of what's possible. Following Penrose (1995), they must envision that it can be done before they attempt to do it. This visioning stage is an essential part of the management of change.

### *8.5 Return to How*

*How* recruited the extended management team into the strategic process. I took the *how* project team off site for a number of two-day meetings. Going off site was not an unusual activity for the extended management team. Many of its meetings had taken place off site, and the team was used to two-day workshops in which they were involved in team building.

*How* meetings were different and owed much to the strategic workshops I had been involved with at iTelco. iTelco is a geographically dispersed team whose management teams regularly meet in hotels and conference centres. In addition, they occasionally ritualised strategic planning through extended meetings lasting two or three days that involved the top 100 managers in the company. The meetings became stories in themselves and broadly followed the classic form of thesis, as described by Lanham in Czarniawska-Joerges (2004), in which the exordium, intended to catch the attention and set the problem delivered by senior management, and a narration of the facts underpinning the issue were given. Over the course of the workshop, managers presented propositions in response to the problem, the proof of an agreed proposition and any refutation of other arguments. The whole workshop was summarised by senior management in a peroration, intended to sum up the arguments and exhort the audience to action in implementation. The process might appear long winded, but

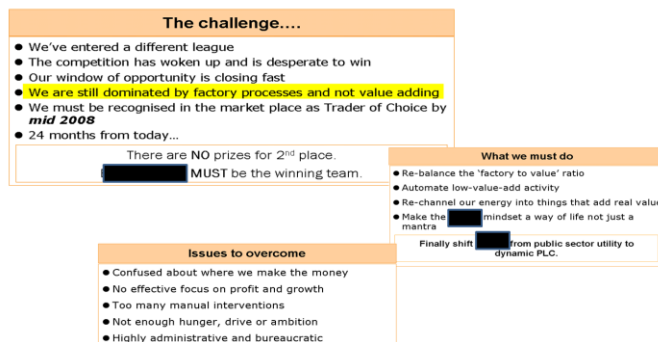
it was usually remarkably effective in harnessing the extended management team to strategic initiatives.

The process develops the organisational explicit knowledge described by Cooke and Brown (2005). It encourages the “re’s” (Bell, 1999) of reordering, rearranging and redesigning. In doing so, it produces strategic initiatives and an organisational genre (Cooke et al., 2005) in which there is a tacit understanding both of what is to be done and why it should be done. On a later assignment, I characterised this outcome as developing *know-why* and *care-why*.

The origin of *how* was in a mismatch between strategic aspirations based on which a major investment had been approved and was in the process of implementation and the need for business change. The *how* agenda is set out in Figure 27 and its scope is illustrated in Figure 28. In reality, *how* represents classic enterprise architecture, but driven from middle management. It owes much to Nonaka and Takeuchi’s (1995) idea of middle-up-down management and to the action research cycle (Lewin, 1946).

Figure 27 How’s Motivation

#### What Is the How Project?



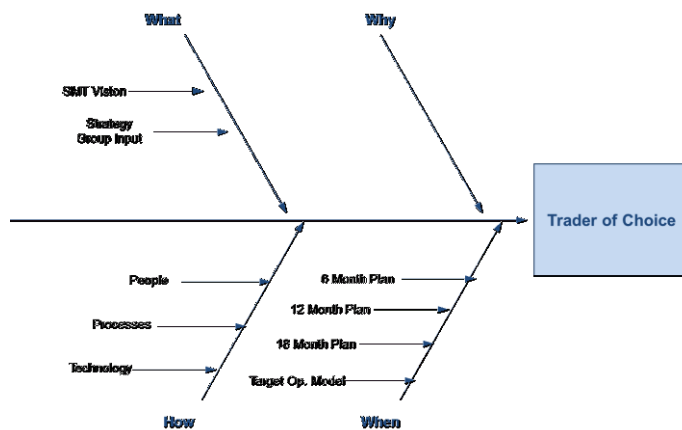
*How* was located within the genre of Trader of Choice, which I discussed earlier. The vision was developed by the senior management team and represented their aspirations for the division of the company they ran. The concept was impenetrable to anyone but the team who had formulated it. When I first questioned it, I was told that

it meant we would be the company people preferred to trade with. After pressing for more information about that what meant, I was told that Barclay’s Capital would want to sit at our table. Probing and questioning increased the “of choice” stakes. To be “of choice” meant that we needed the best processes, the best technology and, above all, the best people, not only at the trading desk but across all functions that supported trading.

As a strategy, it also had the problem of representing only half the Division; trading represented only fifty percent of turnover, and the other half was carried out in direct trades on a business-to-business basis.

Figure 28 is adapted from an internal presentation and represents my early thinking around what the *how* project must achieve. Conceptually, it is derived from the Zachman (1987) architectural framework but was presented to a largely non-technical audience through an Isikawa diagram (Ishikawa, 1976).

Figure 28 How's Scope



Reflecting back, it is interesting to note that I did not complete, and *how* never completed, the *why* dimension of the diagram. Although the management team spoke of a burning platform, and Figure 27 purports to represent the motivation for *how*, these drivers were not seen as relevant to the individual managers who had seen senior managers come and go and fully

expected that this would happen again, as was the case 18 months or so after the period of interest.

There is a tendency to think about change as something that managers do to organisations and to overlook that organisations are people and corporate change needs to be reflected at the individual and group levels. They need to be engaged in the process of change. The *how* project tried to do this. The approach at Netco was very different.

My job role at Netco was as the information systems strategy manager, where I was responsible for strategy, architecture, process and, oddly, the quality system. I was appointed on the advice of external consultants who were concerned that the new CIO, having been promoted from group strategy, had little IS experience. I was brought in through that consultancy's interim practice. Shortly after my appointment, the CIO arranged for my contract to be bought out from the consultancy so that my contractual arrangement was directly with Netco. Within my role I was tasked to assess my direct reports to determine who should be appointed to my role and to do a skills transfer into the group. This is not uncommon for an interim manager and similar roles were reported by the interim managers interviewed for this paper. Finally, I was responsible within my group for implementing the change programme introduced in Mini Case Study 10.

The new chief executive had decided to take the centralised route to change. He took the precaution of retaining an OD consultant from the designing consultancy and had its technical support in hand, but his essential intention was to manage the process hierarchically through his line managers. The line managers had no special skills in change management and a full-time commitment to their functional roles. A number of colleagues were resistant to the proposal; functional managers were losing direct management of their current resources in favour of an obligation to manage the work. Unsurprisingly, they publicly supported the change but were adept at deploying organisational defence routines, as described by Argyris (1986), to delay its implementation.

More junior staff also had issues with the restructuring. They were not only moving from their existing communities and groups but also required to apply for their jobs in the new structure.

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*Mini Case Study 10 Keep Your Heads Down*

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“Keep your head down, and this will all blow over.”

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I was not intended to overhear this comment as I left a presentation by the CIO of a new change programme at Netco. I had joined the company on an interim assignment a day or so before and had only previewed the slides before the presentation. Netco was restructuring its IT group, first from three distinct IT groups into a single entity and then within that entity into a matrix structure in which skills specialists were located in skills groups and assigned to work functions by a resource manager. The new structure had been conceived by a big-six consulting firm and bore an uncanny similarity to the internal structure of a consulting firm.

The comment made me think about the problems of implementation. Implementation requires a detailed appreciation of the “as is” and “to be” business, an understanding of what needs to be done to achieve transition between the two and the ability to manage the day-to-day process of transition. Attempts to manage this process at an executive level are likely to run into significant difficulties.

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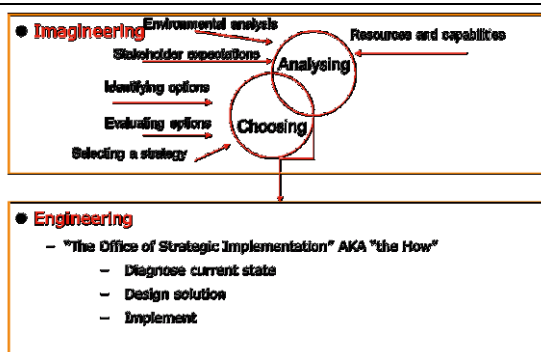
Progress was slow, and the frustration of the CIO was evident. He required progress reports at morning prayers, a Monday morning meeting of his senior management team. As time went by, slippage became both obvious and extensive. At first, the CIO blamed the management team, but over time his ire turned to perceived deficiencies in the OD consultants.

The presentation referred to in Mini Case Study 10 was an example of the management team cutting right to the peroration. Senior management had agreed upon what needed to be done; within their genre it was crystal clear. The purpose of the presentation was to present that outcome and to exhort the audience to action in implementation. But the audience was not part of the process of formulation. They were trying to make sense of what was being said in the context of their own vision of the organisation whilst at the same time being told to implement another.

I find a problem with this approach; there's a disconnect between what the management team knows about the business and what the business knows about itself. Schein's (2010) explanation of this phenomenon is reinforced by Edwards and Potter's (1992) dilemma of stake. Schein identifies three generic groups within organisations, and within that typology the executive group tends to look outwards and is distrustful of internal reports that are expected to be self-interested. In contrast, Schein identifies the operations group as having an entirely internal focus, which, following Penrose (1995), limits its view of possibilities to those things they already know. Bridging these two extremes is the design group, with an outside-in and inside-out view of the world.

Netco's troublesome implementation was to inform my subsequent work on the *how* project.

Figure 29 How's Imagineering



*How* was about allowing the extended management team to review, discuss and critique the senior management team's proposal, provided to them in the exordium (Figure 27) so that they could do the engineering work outlined in Figure 29. The remit was not to define the strategy but to find out what it meant to them and to explore what they must do to deliver it.

Ultimately, they returned to present their conclusions first to the senior managers and then to the firm as a whole.

My contribution to this process was my experience won in other organisations. Penrose's (1995) insight that a manager can only do what he or she can imagine doing suggests an axiom that a manager will interpret a situation only from within a framework built from what

that manager knows. Interim managers, by virtue of their continuous involvement with change, have a wider experience of change than do typical managers. One sponsoring director mentioned to me that when he looked at me he had the sense that I had done it many times, but when he looked at his staff, it was obvious that it was their first time. This comment is a tacit acceptance of the experiential nature of knowledge discussed in Chapter 3.

Equally, I was able to avoid being caught in the dilemma of stake (Edwards and Potter 1992). Interim managers tend not to be tainted by politics or self-interest and are likely to be within their sponsor's network. They are trusted advisers at the executive level, but they operate at a functional level and work in organisational development. These things are represented in the genre of interim management, which embodies both experience and successful implementation.

My work in knowledge management has given me a clear understanding of the power of stories as a knowledge management tool, and I deploy stories as a way of helping managers see what's possible—but I find it important to keep things simple.

The process of simplification is a key management skill. I work as an enterprise architect. In that role I am a boundary spanner between senior management and technical subject matter experts. I implement strategy through the integration of people, processes and technology. I deal with many subject matter experts who need to deal with colleagues from other areas of expertise. There is the potential for a Tower of Babel; at a certain level of abstraction, most management and technical problems appear as coloured blocks on a diagram assembled into a pattern. Colleagues have accused me of oversimplifying complexity—and they may have been right—but complexity does not resolve itself. In my process of simplification, I am striving for empathy between various technical experts, cultivating a common understanding from which a solution can be formulated.

Mini Case Study 11 is a story I deploy when faced with organisational complexity.

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*Mini Case Study 11 John's Story*

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For a short while between 'retiring' from law and becoming an interim manager, I worked part time as an SME management consultant. In that role I met John, who ran a small business in SW London. The business had been established for around half a dozen years, and this business provided an adequate income for its owner and his immediate family. (It's worth noting that in visits to 40 odd SMEs, I never once heard the expression *competitive*

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*advantage*, the measure of success beloved by business schools; success was always measured by the adequacy, in the eyes of the owner, of his or her lifestyle.)

The business was landscape gardening, but not big commercial landscaping. Its target market was women who were alone in their homes during the day. He had around 10 vans—"I buy old BT vans...you know, the ones with the aluminium boxes on the back. Nobody else wants them, but to me they're sheds on wheels"—and only employed female gardeners—"It makes the customers feel safe."

"It must be difficult to get trained gardeners", I ventured. "I would always be pulling up the plants."

"That's easy", he said, "I'd rather have people who know nothing about gardening. There are only a handful of weeds that grow in this area. I could train you to recognise them in half an hour. That's what I do with my girl. I tell them to keep the gardens tidy and to pull up anything I've trained them to recognise. Otherwise, they plant what the customer asks them to plant."

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I am not a gardener, and I know that there is more to gardening than this, but the core of what John had to say rang true to me. An important part of my role as an interim manager is the simplification of complexity.

John's process is a process that limits the unknowns, which he did by reducing the variables within the worldview of his gardeners. The converse is also true. When working with trainee solicitors in my legal career, my concern was not that they knew the law but that they knew when they did not know. To admit you do not know is the first step towards knowing.

Of course, complexity comes later, but it is built upon a platform of understood simplicity. My PowerPoint slide shows that one block of colour talks to another block of colour through this channel. The software designer calls that channel an enterprise service bus and worries about the complexity of SOAP interfaces and messaging, but the executive has a conceptual view of how things work. I have taken this simplicity approach to an extreme by explaining the complexities of a particular architecture using Lego blocks on a baseboard, reassembling the configurations throughout the presentation. In fact, I have been asked by the Open University Business School to talk through the resource-based view of strategy using a similar technique.

A simplistic approach makes it easier to be empathetic. Applying the empathic process to objects in the world immediately leads to knowing. What I know about an object may differ

from what you know, although if we share a similar cultural background, through the process of isomorphism our knowing may be so similar as to represent a common, and for practical purposes identical, understanding of the object. Nonetheless, a certain level of difference will remain and should be assumed (Bennett, 1998).

Through this process, both understanding and an appreciation of one another's perspectives and constraints are built. In addition, the foundations are laid for exploring problems through processes such as the soft-system methodology (Checkland and Scholes, 1990; Checkland and Poulter, 2006). The need to assume a difference in understanding is an important aspect in all communications, and is particularly important when the purpose of communications is to achieve an outcome that satisfies your requirements. Knowing should not be taken for granted

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*Mini Case Study 12 Always Assume a Difference*

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In a recent series of tender meetings, I had asked that each potential supplier attend a meeting post tender that would start with a presentation of what they think they are being asked to supply. This request caused some discussion internally; most thought it unnecessary. Each tender had responded to the same document, and we were able to read what they had submitted. However, and partly I think because I was considered an expert (itself a position of power), I was humoured and the presentations required and made.

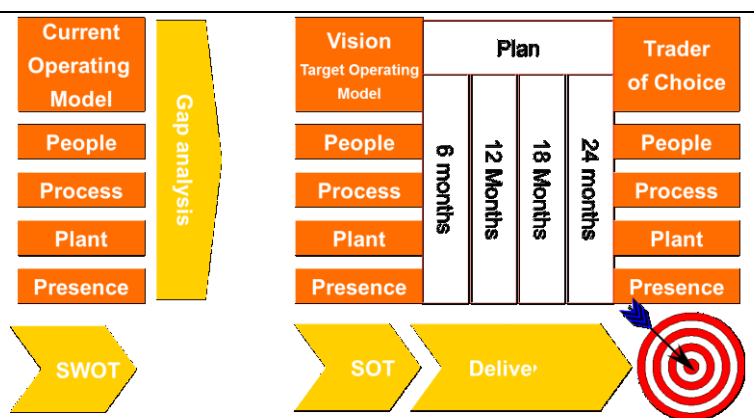
Each presentation was entirely different; none articulated to deliver, which was entirely in accordance with the tender requirements.

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The situation in Mini Case Study 12 represents an interesting dilemma and an opportunity to consider values. The outcome was positive, but it was only achieved because I insisted on the process. There is, of course, always a question about whether I could have handled the situation differently. Was this one of those occasions described by Leonard and Swap (2005), where the tacitness of my knowledge was engaged? Or perhaps Kahneman's (2011) idea of thinking fast or thinking slow might be a better explanation. Was I deploying type 1 or type 2 thinking? Did I recognise a pattern that related to previous experience, or was there something in the tenders that made me curious? My desire to have the presentations was entirely driven by feeling. There was nothing on the face of the submissions suggesting that they were necessary, but I thought that each offer had been forged in a different genre.

The question of power is also worth reflecting upon. My position as expert gave me the power to require a review, but it is not a power that I consciously exercised. Power, Latour (2005) observes, should be assessed from the position of those in proximity to it rather than from the perspective of those who hold it. “Expert” implies roles for both the expert and client (Parsons, 1985), and those roles have norms of behaviour that regulate the relationship. Within the expert–client framework, the expert opinion typically dominates. In a developmental role, it is wise to be aware of that possibility and of the possibility that the relationship makes it more difficult for the non-expert to make decisions.

Figure 30 The How Road Map



Mini Case Study 12 reflects the reality that within a team knowing will not be evenly distributed. A manager does not know just because of his status as manager. Knowing comes from experience, and good managers should be aware of the experience within their team.

But good management is not about abdicating responsibility to team democracy (e.g., see Smelser’s (2011) comments on the need for structure in anarchist organisations). My role in these circumstances is to be an effective leader. I elucidate what I mean by that in Section 6.4 and discuss the role in the context of Hersey and Blanchard’s (1993) leadership framework in Section 3.6.

The *how* project had a number of important outcomes. For example, it produced a Target Operating Model, which I cannot share, and a roadmap by which that operating model might be delivered (Figure 30). But most importantly, it created a genre of tacit understanding across the extended management team of what the strategy meant, what was expected of them and what they might expect from colleagues. In the course of the workshops, the extended management team took ownership of the strategy and engineered it in a way that they thought made it deliverable.

Their peroration was their presentation first to the senior management team and then to the entire division in a “town hall” meeting that revealed their findings and recommendations. In itself that was an achievement, as a number of team members had the scars of previous badly

received presentations (a subject to which I return later). For me personally, the great achievement was the sense of team spirit evident in both the final presentations and the latter workshops. The impression I took away was of an extended management team who was fully engaged with its task.

Figure 30 illustrates the roadmap built on my experience at Netco, where I realised the limitations of operational staff and the need to break a journey down to easily imagined steps.

### 8.6 Netco

The OD consultants engaged to manage the change programme had difficulty in getting traction. The programme was very large, and the staff members, who were generally long serving, had a constrained vision of what was possible. They were being asked to do things that, they vocally claimed, were not in the best interests of the company. Acceptance varied. Most senior managers saw the need for change; more junior staff questioned that need and rejected the particular changes proposed, as they viewed them as impracticable. As one senior manager put it, *“If I do what they ask and the lights go out, I get fired. If I don’t do anything, I get a bollocking.”*

My role was to translate the requirements of the change programme, as it had an impact on my area of responsibility, so that they could be delivered by and through my direct reports.

That role can partially be seen in the context of the traditional role of middle management, as reflected in Nonaka and Takeuchi’s (1995) middle-up-down concept of management.

Middle-up-down management bridges the management’s vision of what should be with the concrete concepts that frontline workers can understand and implement (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, p. 129). Within this framework, middle managers resolve the contradictions between the hopes and aspirations of top management and what could actually exist in the real world. Nonaka and Takeuchi use the analogy of theory: top management articulate a grand theory, and middle management attempt *“to create a mid-range theory that it can test empirically within the company with the help of front line managers”* (1995, p. 129).

In this context the need was to lead my group away from a constrained vision (e.g., what we do now and marginal change within that understanding) and toward an unconstrained vision (our world as the consultant described it). The consultant’s report was unhelpful. It consisted of 200 or so PowerPoint slides that described what we should be doing both in organisational

and technical terms but not how we should get there. The unconstrained nature of the report posed the question *how*: How were we to move from where we were to the nirvana it, supposedly, represented?

Choosing a different metaphor, we drew Camelot on a whiteboard and started to consider what the road to get there might entail. We knew about roadmaps, as we regularly prepared technical roadmaps. But what did this one look like? I contributed scenario planning based on my work with the Open University Business School and the idea of starting from the destination and working back to the origin, picking up each change point (in scenario planning, we called them fracture points) along the roadway. In this way we built in one another's mind a five-year technical roadmap with internalised vision at six-month intervals and a considerably shorter organisational road to change, but again punctuated by intervening vision. The work enabled us to identify projects that needed to be delivered and the resources that we thought would be required. It had an unexpected advantage of breaking the journey down into easy-to-manage chunks that people could imagine themselves delivering.

In the interim the CIO fired the OD consultants and brought in other consultants who had a more directive approach. The new consultants determined that a formal process was required to deliver the new world. They suggested that a target operating model be designed for the IS Group, within which each section of IS would describe its current function and what it must do in the new world, a classic "as is, to be" model. The models were not to be imposed upon us by consultants. We were to develop the model. We had lost the specialist OD consultant, but in his place we were given a consultant who had wide experience of IS operations. This consultant maintained a vast library of PowerPoint slides, with the intention that he would support managers individually as they developed their part of the operating model.

A series of checkpoint presentation reviews were arranged, within which managers could present their conception of the operating model as it developed.

I took this new problem back to my group, and one of my architects, Andrew, suggested that we adapt the Zachman (1987) framework to the problem. The framework is a design tool with which we were familiar in our day jobs as business and IT architects. Andrew produced a revised framework. Figure 31 is a redacted and revised copy of that framework.

Andrew's model set out both what we needed to have and what we needed to do in order to move ahead with our part of the operation. It gave us a head start in the unpleasant business of the progressively challenging process of developing the model.

Figure 31 Target Operating Model (Zachman, 1987)

	Deliverable	Delivered By	Communicated By	RAG Status
Vision and Strategy	Corporate Strategy			
	Business Unit Strategy	BU Leadership Team	BU Leadership Team	
	IM Current Strategy	IM Leadership Team	IM Leadership Team	
	IM Strategic Gap Analysis	IM Leadership Team	IM Strategy	
	IM Future Strategy	IM Leadership Team	IM Leadership Team	
	IM Behavioural Standards & Values	IM Leadership Team	IM Leadership Team	
Business Plan	Financial Plan	Business Planning Team	Business Planning Team	
	Capability Plan			
	Resource Plan			
	Asset Plan			
	Performance Management Framework			
	High-Level Change Plan			
Operating Model	Business Process Model			
	RACIs			
	Enterprise Architecture (+ supporting strategies)	Enterprise Arch/Strategy	Enterprise Arch/Strategy	
	Domain Change Plans	Domain Leads	Domain Leads	
	Communications Framework			
Organisation	Structure			
	Skills Profiles (required and actual)			
	Roles and Expectations			
Location	Location Plan			

The review checkpoints were bloody and an object lesson, for me, at least, on how not to conduct this type of exercise. As a member of the senior management team, I was not expected to make a presentation myself but watched as each team came forward to be savaged by the CIO on presentational points or the consultants on content. The initial submissions were not good, but I took the view that the people making them were not consultants; this was new work to them, and they were struggling to make sense of what was required of them.

Tormenting junior management through excessive criticism of their presentations is not an unusual senior management tactic. I have seen it in a number of organisations, and I am distinctly uncomfortable with it. In one company I had an otherwise able manager point blank refuse to give a strategy presentation of the development that he had led, and led well, because of the beating the last time he was before the senior management team. On another occasion, during an away day, I watched managers get belittled in front of their peers in an infamous *Dragon's Den* format in which they were expected to present and defend business development ideas.

In the context of the *how* project and in a separate target operating model for that company, I consciously intervened with the senior management group to discuss its behaviour when receiving presentations from subordinates and to make sure that any criticism was constructive.

*Genchi genbutsu* translates to “have you seen it yourself?” (Takeuchi et al., 2008). This saying has relevance for interim managers. Prior to Netco, I had not implemented a formal target operating model, and in fairness to Netco's CIO, his constant request was that he be shown what good looks like. That's a reasonable request—and something that Netco and subsequent experience has allowed me to do. I took Andrew's framework to PowerCo, where it was used both to inform the restructuring of the Trading IT Group and to underpin my work on the *how* project, which I deal with later. By that time, however, I had also completed my qualification with the Open Group's architectural framework (the TOGAF qualification) and had a firmer grip on what good looks like.

The TOGAF model (Open Group, 2009) suggests explicitly the use of formalised operating models in business design. At ShipCo, I had adopted the COBIT framework (ISACA, 2014) as my reference standard against which I could assess its IT delivery.

The position I found myself in at Netco was unusual. Most interim managers have dealt with the issue at hand in previous assignments or through direct observation. This is an important aspect of interim management. I learned how long a minute is by sitting beside a call centre agent as she made conversation with the caller whilst “my system” tried to deliver the information she needed to progress the call. It’s unlikely that the chief executive in most western companies would indulge in such direct observation, but the interim manager is a trusted report and proxy.

### *8.7 Summary*

A purpose of this chapter is to link the theory discussed in this paper to the practice of interim management.

Clearly, interim managers are products of the same management education that produces managerialism in traditional management. Why might their approach differ from that of typical managers? I have answered that question by first positioning managerialism as an influence, albeit not an overpowering one, on management. Second, I have said that relationship and networks are important. I have contextualised interim management as a bridge between a firm’s leadership and its workforce and emphasised the importance of the relationship the interim has with his sponsor. I have stressed the developmental role of interim managers at the individual and group levels, and I have argued that interim managers, by virtue of their experience, are better suited to manage organisational change. I ground this latter argument in the opportunities given to the interim manager to develop the tacit skills needed to successfully manage change.



## Chapter 9: My Claims

In the introduction I said that academic research has largely ignored interim management and interim managers (Goss and Bridson, 1998, p. 37). Where research does exist, it relates to specific HR interests in interim management (e.g., see Inkson et al.'s (2001) investigation of the psychological contract of interim managers or Feltham and Hughes (1999) work on their personality traits). There has been some interest in the commercial aspects of their employment (e.g., Weingart, 2003; Storey et al., 2002) and in their use in higher education (e.g., McWilliam et al., 2008). The work notwithstanding, the primary source of information on interim management is the practitioner press or books written by interim managers (e.g., Clutterbuck and Dearlove, 1999; Golzen, 1992; Lovegrove, 2007; McGovern and Russell, 2001; and Russell, 2001).

### *9.1 A Theory of Interim Management*

This work addresses the shortfall in the literature by documenting the work of practicing interim managers in the context of their practice. In doing so it identifies specific claims about interim management and an emergent theory of interim management.

#### *General Claims to Contribute to What Is Known About Interim Managers*

Combining my own practice and the evidence of the practice of interim management, as described by practicing interim managers and agents, provides a theory of interim management that has the following attributes:

#### *Claim 1: The Role of Interim Managers*

Interim managers may be employed in a line role or as functional consultants. Both agents and interim managers expect that an assignment will bring a lasting benefit to an organisation. Interims imbedded in a line role expect to contribute functional and general management skills to an organisation. They characterise their work as change managers and emphasise their role in leadership and organisational development.

*Claim 2: Cross-Sector Working*

Interim managers have good general management and leadership skills, which might suggest they could be used in cross-sector engagements. However, interim managers typically tend to work within particular sectors of the market. There are exceptions, but this appears to be a demand constraint, as clients look for recent sector experience in placing interim assignments.

*Claim 3: Interim Managers as Process Consultants*

Interim managers emphasise their ability to deliver via the client's staff and the need to develop those staff members in order to enable delivery. They emphasise their role in transferring knowledge into the organisation through the processes of coaching, mentoring and implementation of best practice. A key element of their role is the development of the staff who report to them. Typically, interim managers develop staff by example rather than through knowledge management processes such as storytelling. They are, however, very hands on in their approach.

The interviews confirm that interim managers are predominantly involved in change management, as indicated in my earlier work (Tyrrell, 2004a, 2006). What is new is the evidence that much of that change is affected at the individual level through the development of individuals.

*Claim 4: Interim Managers Are Not Consultants*

Interim managers may have the characteristics of Maister's (2003) middle-range consultants, but they see themselves as distinctly different from consultants. They identify particular skills in "hands-on change" that they say consultants have difficulty with. My own practice in this area is explicitly based on process consulting theory, which I outline in Section 3.6.

*Claim 5: Networking*

The effectiveness of interim managers is due in part to their ability to bridge between senior management and more junior employees. They describe their membership in senior management networks as an important aspect of their ability to deliver. Their expertise and independence is an important element of the ability to maintain that access.

*Claim 6: Politics*

Interim managers distinguish between organisational politics and the kind of engagement that is necessary to ensure their assignments are completed (e.g., see Buchanan and Boddy, 1992, on back staging).

*Claim 7: The Business Case*

An interim assignment should be able to demonstrate its value through a business case that shows a benefit to the client company.

Goss and Bridson's (1998) hypothesis is that interim management can be modelled through three broad organisational stereotypes: the flexible firm, the learning organisation, and the networked firm. This hypothesis is demonstrated to be false, at least in relation to the private sector. There is, however, scope for further research in the public sector, where the current evidence suggests the hypothesis may find some support.

*9.2 My Developing Practice*

McNiff (2013) writes that knowledge is the basis of action. In working through the DBA process, I have acquired knowledge of and about interim management. The opportunity to talk with other interim managers about their practices has been of considerable value. Interim managers do meet together, and when they meet, they swap stories about assignments and the people they are dealing with. But the interviews I did for this paper and for Tyrrell (2004a) were qualitatively different. Our joint intension in the interviews was to uncover the practice of interim management, and so the interviews had a richness and concentration that could not exist in a social context. In those discussions we moved from conversation to dialogue, and I learned a great deal in the process.

Reflexivity takes place at a number of levels. The interviews with interim managers and agents provided a form of circulatory reflexivity, as we jointly developed our perspectives on interim management. There is more to take from that material, and I think, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest, revisiting it will give further insights, just as revisiting this paper in its various versions has enriched my understanding.

In submitting this report, I have tried to give an account of not just the practice of interim management but indeed my own practice in developing an appropriate perspective on interim management. To that end, I have written about my early uncertainties about the work, its place in a framework for a professional doctorate, and how I worked through the options to come to the current presentation. In Chapter 6, rather than simply present the end product, I have written of the methodological journey during which I tried first one approach then another to find the right way of proceeding.

In a research context, reflexivity has enabled me to connect with elements of the literature that I knew about but was not fully conscious of. My practice is one of dialogue; that is what comes naturally to me. I am aware of, and have internalised to an extent, the work of, for example, Schein (1999). I found pleasure in revisiting old friends such as Hersey and Blanchard (1993) and in the recollection of a manager colleague who bought a copy of the *One Minute Manager* (Blanchard, 2011) for all his subordinates to ensure they “knew” what they should be doing. I also developed deeper understanding upon coming back to texts after a break of many years.

In the case study in Chapter 8 I have presented what I did, and why I did it, over a period of time and through similar assignments. I have tried to portray the learning that takes place in an assignment. Oftentimes, things do not go well, and there is a need to step back and work out why that is so. That was the case with PowerCo and the dispute between its two divisions. I have also tried to show a cycle of development through a number of assignments. Doing so reflects a form of career development and an accumulation of knowledge.

There is another element to that learning, and it relates to way in which interim management presents a career ladder to practitioners. Despite the market expectation of previous experience (Chapter 5), the diversity among assignments enables new challenges to be faced and new skills developed.

I have grounded my experience in the experience of the interim managers whose stories I present in Chapter 7 and in the literature. I have found that both similarities and differences between my practice and the practices of other interim managers. We share a view, which appears to be widely held amongst interim managers, that we have a developmental role in assignments. There are similarities in how that role is discharged, with colleagues tending to favour a mentoring/coaching process. There may be a point of difference in my use of

storytelling as a knowledge transfer device, but I think that difference requires further research. I favour storytelling because of a knowledge management background, but I think the close, personal work of development reported by the interims interviewed would be difficult to maintain without some narrative context.

We share similar perspective on the political nature of organisations, and there is common agreement about the need to be part of the senior management's network. Views are mixed about organisational politics, but the majority view is to avoid what might be described as career politics and to deal with political situations that directly relate to the interim project through the process of back staging.

### *9.3 Relating My Practice to Theory*

Working through the development of the paper, but particularly chapters three and six provided an opportunity to engage fully with the theory. In doing so I moved through the process of Moustakas' heuristic enquiry as a distinct activity from the research into interim management. I describe in chapter two the problems I had in finding traction with the literature and in chapter six how I resolved those problems. That resolution involved immersion in an approach which ultimately I did not use but which gave me valuable insights into the data. Working with the data, a period of incubation provided the illumination required to encourage the investigation of narrative research and the finalisation of this paper.

I found a correlation between that process and the practice of interim management where the initial problem is rarely the problem that needs to be dealt with, and many other problems will need to be solved along the way.

The discussion in Chapter 3 is of a worldview that has taken me nearly twenty years to develop and finalise. I do not think I would have done so if I had not needed to immerse myself in meaning, rather than merely *know-that*. Understanding how people make sense of the world is a major step towards being able to help them develop their world to suit their vision. Indeed, understanding how I make sense of the world has enabled me to contextualise the part of my practice that involves change in process consulting. Although I hope my practice has developed along similar lines, and the evidence of Chapter 8 shows that it has, standing on the shoulders of the process consultants who have gone before me will accelerate my development.

#### 9.4 Relating My Studies to My Values

Preparing to write this paper has meant that I needed to exam my own values and perspectives. Over a period of twenty years or so, I have moved from the logical man (a title given to me by Will Newbold of Ashridge Management College) to a pragmatic one. During that time, I have also become less judgemental. It has been said of me that I do not suffer fools lightly—and that's true—but as I grow older, I find there are less fools. There is relatively little effort involved in shifting my perspective to try to see a situation from another's point of view, and when I do so, that different perspective seems less foolish.

In Section 3.6 I articulated a set of values that describe my attitude to management leadership and organisational development. I do not claim that those values make me a paragon of virtue—merely that they have been worked out in practice and seem to be useful. An outcome of my work in the DBA programme is that I am closer to *knowing why*, and I will continue with that journey because I *care why*.

#### 9.4 Summary

In summary this paper has contributed to the body of knowledge of interim management. In addition, it has provided me with an opportunity to directly reflect on my practice as an interim manager in the contexts of the practice of other interim managers and the literature. Finally, this work has provided a reflective opportunity that extends beyond the immediate research by enabling me to think through my values and developmental needs. Within the Scott et al. (2004) typology, these claims predominantly fall within Modes 2 and 3. However, Chapter 2 is explicitly positioned as Mode 4 knowledge. Alternatively, others may perceive my work as propositional. If it is treated as such, it contributes to Mode 2 knowledge.

The work has contributed to my practice through an improvement in my tacit skills and the development of my understanding of what I do, why I do it and my values (i.e., McNiff's (2013) I-theories). That contribution represents Mode 3 knowledge within Scott et al.'s typology.

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## Appendix A

**Jeffrey Tyrrell MBA, LL.M. BSc (Hons), TOGAF, Prince 2, Solicitor (non-practicing)**

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### **Career Summary**

Information Systems/Programme Director and Lead Enterprise Architect with a background in delivering change in B2B, the electricity and water industries, professional services, legal, energy trading, academic, technology, telecoms, private equity and banking. Commercially aware with broad experience, having worked for FT100 organisations including Centrica and British Energy, professional regulation, including the Financial Ombudsman Service, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, and private equity.

Led development of IS strategies in FT100 companies

Led business and IS improvement and restructuring programmes

Enterprise Architecture specification and implementation, including BPM, embracing SOA as a business concept to inform and enable appropriate business and technical solutions

Established and developed Enterprise Architecture practices and procedures that have brought tangible business benefits including significant reductions in operating costs and increased operational flexibility

Established and developed programme and project management practices and procedures

Achievements include the re-architecture of legacy systems to reduce costs, eliminate vendor lock-in and reduce time to market for new products

Lead architect for the transformation of the central settlement system for the UK Electricity Industry

Lead architect on a £38 million business transformation and technical refresh programme in a trading environment

M&A, due diligence, transition design and management

Support to the executive and senior management in strategic analysis, formulation and implementation

Recognised strategic thinker but with the ability to focus on the detail of implementation

Team builder, people developer, mentor and coach; a proven leader who focuses on delivery through building team competence and belief in the ability to deliver, but with a willingness to step in if required to ensure delivery

Positive, can-do attitude, self-motivated, able to rapidly assimilate complex information, good problem-solving and decision-making skills

### **Education**

DBA (Current Study, submission due 2013) Nottingham Business School

LLM, (1999) European Management and Employment Law, University of Leicester

MBA (1994) Open University

BSc (Hons) (2005) Sociology & Economics, The Open University

TOGAF Enterprise Architecture (2009)

Prince 2 (1997)

Solicitor (Non-Practising) (1979)

### **Core Skills**

Programme and project management

EA Frameworks (Zachman and TOGAF) techniques and tools

Ensure technical solutions are fit for purpose, meet the business requirements and adhere to the technology roadmap

Strategic analysis tools and processes

Programme blueprinting and benefits mapping

Development of strategic roadmaps and alignment of development services, applications, datacentres, networks, and infrastructure platforms

Definition of target operating models

Business capability assessment

Responsible for the definition and management of the enterprise architecture

Strategic analysis, formulation and implementation

Maintaining with the executive a shared vision of the potential of technology to transform the operating model

Strong commercial acumen

Team management, staff development, coaching and mentoring

Excellent presentation skills

### **Work Experience**

E\*\*\*\*\* Ltd

Jan 2012 – March 2013

Design Authority Manager

Reporting to the Head of PMO, responsible for Enterprise Architecture to support the UK Electricity Industry Central Settlement System

Led a team of architects and analysts who specialised in UK electricity market regulations, business architecture and solutions architecture

Played a pivotal role in the definition of a new strategic IT platform for the settlement process, which will eliminate the current outsource vendor lock-in; achieve the business objectives of economy, efficiency and effectiveness; and provide strategic flexibility through enhanced data processing capability and reduced TCO targeted at 50% of current costs. The platform is based on SOA principles

Influenced the executive and key stakeholders to ensure that the potential of technology was included in the strategic process and that informed decisions were made in technology adoption

Developed the blueprint for the BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) Transformation programme and the technology roadmap to support that programme

Led the definition and adoption of a Business Reporting/BI capability to replace current manual processes. Provided architectural support to the detailed business analysis required and to the commercial team in the development first of an RFI and subsequently an RFP.

Influenced senior stakeholders and the Executive in the adoption of the solution

Provided architectural support and advice to the SMART metering programme, the EMR (Contract for Difference) project, XXXX's bid to become the Data Communications Company (DCC), and other strategic projects

Member of the Innovation Board, the Technical Management Board and the Design Authority Board (the latter two boards being tripartite forums with XXXX's business process outsource and development strategic partners)

Responsible for working with senior business stakeholders, the Change Team and the BPO to understand and shape business initiatives into deliverable solutions, projects and programmes

Part Time Roles                      February 2011 – December 2011                      Various  
Open University Business School (OUBS), Consultant, Knowledge Management  
OUBS, Lecturer, Knowledge Management, UK and Belgium  
OUBS, Lecturer, Corporate and Competitive Strategy and Strategic Analysis, UK, Romania and Russia  
OUBS, Lecturer and Supervisor, MBA student action learning projects  
Pearson Education, Consultant in relation to its Higher Education programme  
Manchester Business School, External Academic, supervising MBA dissertations

\*\*\*\*\* Lines IT                      November 2010 – January 2011                      Consultant

Reporting to the Head of Change, review of existing management and control processes and the design of a target operating model for the governance and management of change to a SAP system for the management and control of finance, accounting and container transport

Part-Time Roles                      August 2009 – October 2010                      Various

OUBS, Consultant, Knowledge Management  
OUBS, Lecturer, Knowledge Management, UK and Belgium  
OUBS, Lecturer, Corporate and Competitive Strategy and Strategic Analysis, UK, Romania and Russia  
OUBS, Lecturer and Supervisor, MBA student action learning projects  
On behalf of clients of Fenton Management LLP, chaired the development of a business proposal and business plan for the development of a business and commercial awareness course to be presented to in-house legal counsel. The development team was drawn from legal counsel from prestigious commercial and consulting organisations and leading academics in the management development and leadership fields  
On behalf of Vespa Capital LLP and reporting to a partner, IS due diligence for a proposed acquisition

\*\*\*\*\* Water                      April 2009 – August 2009                      Head of Planning

Reporting to the Director, Water Services, successfully designed and established an integrated planning function for Thames Water Operations  
Played a pivotal role in the definition and successful introduction of an operating model to deliver centralised planning within Operations  
Assessed SAP's potential to support integrated planning within Operations  
Managed the agreement and modelling of Operation's SLAs and OLAs

Part-Time Roles                      April 2008 – July 2009                      Various

OUBS, Consultant, Knowledge Management  
OUBS, Lecturer, Knowledge Management, UK  
OUBS, Lecturer, Corporate and Competitive Strategy and Strategic Analysis, UK and Romania  
OUBS, Lecturer and Supervisor, MBA student action learning projects



OUBS, lead author and course member on MBA course in Pharmaceutical and Life Science Regulations

\*\*\*\*\* Water August 2007 – March 2008 Transitions Director

Reporting to the Chief Executive, led the successful transition of Thames Water's unregulated commercial businesses into Veolia—transaction value ~£75 million. Working with the executive, played a pivotal role in the integration design of the combined companies and the required operating model  
Led the team who analysed the exiting level of integration into Thames Water systems and services and designed the transition services required to support the services. Led the negotiations on the transition services agreement  
Led the design of the integrated systems and services and the integration of the acquired businesses into Veolia

\*\*\*\*\* November 2005 – July 2007 Chief Business Architect

Reporting to the Trading Director, appointed to develop the Trading IS Strategy and to work within a senior management group on the development and implementation of a business transformation programme with the objectives of improving trading performance, reducing transaction errors and improving time to market  
Successfully led the development of the trading IS Strategy based on SOA principles (to maximise agility) despite opposition from the Group Information Management Department, developed the business case for implementation and played a pivotal role in obtaining Group approval for the investment  
Established an enterprise architecture function to ensure continuing alignment between business requirements and IT/IS, including the documentation of the existing and future architecture from business through to IT delivery  
Led a programme through which middle managers interpreted and articulated what the transformation meant in their area and supported them in the redesign of their operations  
Managed a BPO programme in the direct sales organisation to standardise and improve processes and to ensure alignment with new technology  
Defined the solutions to replace legacy trading and risk management systems. Played central role in the evaluation and selection of replacement systems and provided architectural support to the implementation project  
Managed the integration programme to support the IS strategy. This period saw the introduction of an ESB, a canonical language, integration standards and procedures, utility architecture, virtualisation and automatic server builds  
Led the development of a Trading IS Target Operating Model, the assessment of Trading IS's capability and competencies and the required development programme  
Played a pivotal role in establishing programme and project management processes and systems  
Led the project gateway process.

## Early Career Details

1988–2005

Capio Health Care: 2005, Transition Manager	Montagu Private Equity—Vettx A/S: 2005, Transition Manager
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of GB: 2003–2005, Business design and outsource consultant	National Grid: 2002–2003, IS Strategy Manager
Via Networks: 2000–2001 Transition Manager	Centrica: 2001, 2003, IS Improvement Manager
Telewest Communications: 1999–2000, Business	PatientAccess.com: Architect



Transition Manager

Merrill Lynch: 1999, Project Consultant

Braid Systems: 1997–1998, Business

Architecture

Birmingham City Council, Legal Department:

Business Architecture

Lewis Silkin, Solicitor: 1994, Consultant

Racal Datacom: 1994–1995 Project Recovery

Saunders Sobell Leigh & Dobin Solicitors:

1994–1998, Solicitor, IT Partner, Managing

Partner & Consultant

Banque Paribas (London): 1998–1999, Programme  
Manager

Project Manager: 1995–1996 Energy Settlements &  
Information Systems Ltd (NGC plc)

Lyons Davidson, Solicitors: IS Architecture/IS strategy

Bucknall Austin plc: Project Consultant

**Professional Memberships and Academic Appointments**

Holds appointments (Lecturing) in Strategy

and Management in Practice, Open

University Business School

External Academic, Manchester Business  
School

Member of the Institute of Directors

Member of the British Academy of  
Management

Fellow of the Institute of Analysts &  
Programmers

Member of the British Computer Society

Member of the Strategic Planning Society

Associate Member of the Higher Education  
Academy

## Appendix B: Exhibits

### Exhibit 1 Memoing My Reading (I)

Extract from Journal, 12 August 2008

I find Latour (2005) very difficult. The underlying idea is not hard to understand, but he expresses himself in a way that makes Bernice Martin a model of clarity. The task for today is to get to grips with what he means by actants, as opposed to actors. He uses the expression sparingly, at p. 54-5 and 199 of *Reassembling*.

Actants comes from the study of literature (p. 54), and he uses it...

Extract from Journal, 15 September 2008

Law's "hinterland" (2004) and Latour's (2005) "black boxes" appear to me to be substantially the same thing—an area of former enquiry about which there is widespread agreement and in relation to which there is no collective appetite to re-open. The "knowledge" generated prior to closure is reified into "facts" that represent the subject area, and those facts will be carried forward to other areas of enquiry.

Need to think about the process of reification

Extract from Journal, 18 September 2008

I think Law's concept of hinterlands includes Latour's black boxes, but the two terms are not synonymous. The black boxes are a subset of what might be found in the hinterland.

Extract from Journal, 19 September 2008

Law's—so the essential point is that practice operates at a level of abstraction, taking what's perceived to be important and disregarding the unimportant. In that practice assumptions are made about the integrity of past theories, Latour's black box, and the relevance of data. An early causality in this process of abstraction is the disregarding of the method by which relevant data was obtained. Perhaps something of the meaning of the data is lost in that process, but the resulting simplification of reality enables the perceived essentials to be understood. In short, scientists, and for that matter managers, work with a representation of reality but not with reality itself.

### Exhibit 2 Memoing My Reading (II)

[Context work on developing an Open University Module on Life Science Regulation] 5 November 2005

The trend towards professionalism in society undercuts the traditional way in which we should look at society.

Perkin (2002) appears to see professions only from the perspective of an epistemology of knowledge, but that is an early first impression that I need to validate. A wider view might also embrace values as an essential prerequisite to the professionalization of an occupation. And should those values be more than mere consensus—this is how we behave—or should they be enforceable by regulation? Must that regulation be by the profession or of the professional? The latter admits the idea that control of a profession could be by those who are not members of the profession. But that suggests de-professionalization, which has increasingly been the case in UK health care in the last 5 years or so.

Arguably, the socialism of Web et al. germinates the modern labour party. Web et al.'s advocacy of professionalism in government led to the corporatism of post-war Britain and the attempts by government to gain control of important parts of the economy through regulation.

Thought—given the share of the economy dominated by government, is it surprising that government seeks control?

### Exhibit 3 Post-Meeting Reflection

Extract from Journal, 26 October 20XX

At yesterday's meeting with the SMT about strategy, the context of the debate was the "*how*" feedback that there was no understanding of strategy within the business.

The meeting quickly polarised into two groups: those who thought there was a strategy that had not been communicated, and those who thought the problem was with the staff who did not understand the strategy. Individuals shifted between those groups as the debate developed, but at the end there was no clear sense of the root cause.

That outcome was not surprising, as there was confusion in the SMT about what a strategy was. Some thought that the "Trader of Choice" vision was a strategy; others thought that the journey towards "Trader of Choice" was it. One, B, thought that the *how* group should not be concerned with this issue, as their role was implementation. She did not appear to accept that implementation requires some knowledge of outcome.

It seems to me that there is a lack of coherent thinking at this level on this subject. H reinforced that view this morning by questioning whether there is a unified vision in the context of the performance measurement framework. Clearly from the discussion we had, there was not.

N would like these issues settled over the next couple of weeks. His position appears to be that he does not know or is confused about what a strategy is if it's not the journey. He is happy with the idea of an emergent strategy but understands that staff might need more signposting.

### Exhibit 4 Thinking About the Job

[Context: As transition director, the acquisition of a business]

Extract from Journal, 25 November 20XX

The key issue for the coming week will be to sort the head office staff. Although we have spent some time with the sites, we have spent relatively little time working with head office. That might come back to haunt us.

The Transition Bulletin will go some way to help head office, but I need to be there Monday and Tuesday.

My second area of concern is procurement. I'm not at all sure we have this under control. In fact I imagine that G has done nothing since his visit and subsequent report. It should not be difficult, but it will need attending to.

Open issues include occupational health (Do we have a solution?), SHEQ, where we do not have a confirmed staffing position, and the pension position. I'm assuming we will have closed off the outstanding fleet problems by Wednesday or at least sorted out some vehicles to replace the missing Godfrey Davis ones.

### Exhibit 5 Tutor Notes

November 2011

The first day of school is a time to get to know one another and to get a feel for the course. I think we managed both, and by and large there seems to be quite a bit of activity heading towards TMA01.

Our coursework concentrated on an overview of Units 1–3. We used both the NASA and Toyota case studies to gain insight into different views of knowledge management. Each case study provided its own insights; from NASA we were able to consider issues and concepts such as the loss of knowledge, culture, knowledge silos, the use of IT systems and the individual knowledge transfer process. Toyota helped with building the idea that knowledge resides within individuals and highlighted the important roles that communications processes and culture have in knowledge sharing.

Communications and culture provide a natural place to consider Units 2 and 3. We saw in Toyota a hands-off approach to managing knowledge, but what appeared to be knowledge management through embedded management processes. This contrasted with NASA's explicit knowledge management programme, although there again culture was important but arguably as a negative factor in the development of organisational knowledge sharing.

It ought to be possible to place NASA and Toyota on a continuum of formal to informal processes, NASA to Toyota. Where might your own organisation be positioned on that scale? I find it interesting that both organisations see personal knowledge as central to the issue of knowledge management and the importance of involving people in the process, but each has adopted a different approach.

With that said, there are a number of common points that can be distilled from both cases. Both cases emphasise the need to:

Encourage knowledge/information exchange

Enable people to find other people

Identify people who have links to previous projects

Enable communities to decide what should be documented

Provide technology that supports communication and provides a data store

The case studies give insight into the problems of knowledge management and enable us to think about abstracting some general lessons for knowledge management practice. For me those lessons include:

Having a clear strategy: Knowledge management needs a clear strategy rooted in the realities of the organisational/marketing/industry context and the key success factors (remember B820) that must be addressed. Clearly, there is a need to communicate the strategy and to have some means to measure success. Those means may be quantitative (e.g., easy to measure the take up of knowledge sharing technology) or qualitative (e.g., the diffusion of best practice and understanding).

Developing organisational capabilities: Strong links here to B820 and the RBV of strategy (stretch and leverage come to mind) ideas about how knowledge workers are managed, issues of retention, motivation and recognition, and the management of intellectual capital, including brand and reputation.

Organisational learning never stops: Learning is a process that includes systems that support the diffusion of knowledge and innovation.

Developing organisational memory: Not reinventing the wheel, voiding the "not invented here" syndrome, the capture of knowledge as routines and processes, distribution and reuse.

Only capturing what is necessary: Toyota appears to do this well, and considerations include the cost of knowledge, taxonomy, representation and navigation.

People are key in knowledge management: Training and development, systems and support. Linking those who know to those who need to know. Acknowledgement of expertise.

Communications is key: Communications has many levels and rightly has a unity to itself. The assumption that communications has been achieved underlies much management failure. High- and low-context communications, the constructivist position taken in the course.

Knowledge management issues: A useful typology might be issues of access and issues of exchange.

I hope these notes are of help, and I look forward to seeing you at the next day school.

I attach the day school and course slides.

## Exhibit 6 Organisations as Communities

[Context note whilst reading Logan, D., King, J. & Fischer-Wright, H., 2008. *Tribal Leadership Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organisation*, New York: HarperCollins.]

Extract from Journal, 25 June 2008

The metaphor of towns works on one level but ignores social stratification. Towns are not single, homogeneous units but are stratified social groups that have very little to do with each other.

Moreover, when related to an organisational context, where the town is the organisation, we need to think about boroughs within towns. The information management department is a discrete organisation from the trading department (or division, or whatever subsets the organisation uses). But treating the metaphor in that way does not develop the whole picture. Information management may itself be structured in any number of ways, as might the trading or other division. These wards, to carry the town metaphor one stage further, are themselves socially stratified at the least between managers, who might associate themselves with their ward and a management group as well as workers who perform functions within the ward.

The result is that organisations are divided both vertically, reflecting their hierarchical structure, and horizontally, reflecting social stratification. Moreover, an individual may find him or herself located within a number of cells or roles. As a manager within a ward, he will be associated with that ward. but as a manager she may be group a manager sets her apart from the workers within the ward—and within the social group manager; though here she is likely to be categorised as “middle management” and may very well be stigmatised by other managers as a “first line” manager and, as such, not quite one of them.

## Exhibit 7 Inside or Out

Extract from Journal, 3 January 20XX

For the purposes of an action research project, am I an outsider at [XX]?

I think it partly depends on who is asking the question. At a personal level, my psychological contract is that relevant to temporary work. I think of the assignment in terms of a fixed but indeterminate period and take some comfort in an end point—not that I’m looking for an end, merely that an end and the thought of the new assignments that will follow is reassuring.

The senior management team probably thinks of me as temporary or, as B (HR) puts it, they try not to think of an end date because doing so means they will have to work out a permanent solution for the roles I now cover. Yet the time is coming when they will have to.

R probably expresses the view of the staff. For, I think the second time, he came to me to seek the [XX] view of a situation arising from his work with external consultants. R clearly groups me [XX] and not with the various groups of consultants on site. To him, I am part of the management hierarchy.

Although the Christmas party invitations were eventually widened to cover IT contractors, the original scheme was that they would go to staff only. I was included in the original invitations.

## Exhibit 8 E and I

Extract from Comments on Student Assignment September 2001

Although I like your approach to the evidence—questions, followed by a business case—I would like you to keep in mind that an important aspect of the EBI is your development as a manager. At the day school, I talked about McNiff’s “E” and “I” outcomes. In your answer you talked about some of the evidence you might gather to achieve your “E” outcomes, but said nothing about your personal

development, your “I” outcomes. In both categories you need to identify the sorts of evidence you will be seeking and how you propose to gather, use and present it.

#### Exhibit 9 Feedback from Staff

“Got your note—I was hoping to catch up with you too before you leave. This is really unfortunate, as your experience and leadership will be missed, not just by the DA team but by XXXX and industry as a whole. It is unfortunate that management has obvious reluctance toward change and lack of appreciation regarding the challenges facing us. We hope to build on the good foundation you started.”

##

“From a personal perspective, I have learnt a lot from you and was benefiting from your experience. Thank you for your support. It has been a pleasure to work with you, both as my manager and a great person, who I and the team have a lot of respect for.

“I did your 360 degree feedback earlier this week and luckily saved it in a Word document (mainly to spot typos). I thought I’d send some of it across. You may find this useful:

“Jeff has been an inspiration to the DA team, and under his leadership, bridged the market and systems side of DA, and boosted the moral of the team. As a result the productivity and profile of the team were raised across XXXX.

“Jeff allowed the team freedom to deliver their work using their best judgement. This empowered the team to make decisions and manage their own work. However, what makes Jeff an excellent manager is that he steps in when required. There were a few occasions when I found it difficult to cope, which would have had an impact on delivery. I asked Jeff for support, and he addressed the situation. He provides the right balance of challenge and support to the team.

“Jeff is very keen on the career development of his direct reports. This has been evident from day one, when he took over the DA team and began implementing initiatives such as the Brown Bag Lunch/designing the DA and supporting his direct reports in developing their skills. This makes me feel valued as an individual and, as a result, has enthused my desire to keep developing my career at XXXX.

“Referring to this individual’s behaviour what could they develop further?

“Whist I believe people can always improve, there are a few people who have reached a stage in their career where they excel at what they do and become a role model for their peers, managers and direct reports. Jeff is such an example and his colleagues will do well to use him as a role model.”

##

“I’m sorry to hear that the decisions being made are getting stranger.

“It’s been a privilege to work with you, and I think you have made a real positive impact on DA and everyone we have worked with. XXXX will lose a great deal from not having you. I personally have certainly learnt a lot and am very appreciative of that, and hopefully I wasn’t too much of a pain in the ass to deal with. At any rate, I wish you all the best with your next endeavour and hope you end up somewhere with slightly more reasonable people.”

##

“It’s been a pleasure working with you too, and I’m shocked and saddened by how things have turned out. One of the reasons I took the role was the opportunity to learn from you, and I wish I’d had more of a chance to do that. I’d like to share with you some of the comments I made on your 360:”

“Referring to this individual’s behaviour, what are they doing really well?

“Communicating a vision for the role of architecture in XXXX. I hear a consistent message whatever the situation, which makes me feel that it is coming from real conviction and commitment.

“Creating a sense that the development of our approach and capabilities is a joint endeavour. I feel that I’m being given an opportunity to learn rather than told that I have a problem I need to fix.

“Do you have any further comments?

“I do enjoy Jeff’s enthusiasm for trying out different ways of using tools (e.g., OneNote). I have picked up a couple of ideas that I’ve found useful at work and at home, and it reinforces my sense that it’s OK to have a play and see what works.

“I hope you soon find a new challenge with a company that appreciates what you can bring to it.”