

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

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EGALITARIAN TEAMS IN A MILITARY HIERARCHY: A STUDY OF THE FORMATION OF THE
ROYAL AIR FORCE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

DEFENCE AND SECURITY

PhD THESIS

2013-14

Supervisors: Professor K Grint, Dr M Dunn

November 2013

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a participant observer and action research case study of the Royal Air Force's efforts to improve its senior leadership from 2007 to 2010. It addresses the research question: what are the conditions required to establish an egalitarian team in a military hierarchy? It examines the establishment of the Senior Leadership Team, designed to operate as a forum for the dissemination of the leader's intent, dissemination of information, and generation of ideas. The literature review argues there are four bodies of relevant knowledge that derive from the research question: forming large teams, use of power, changing culture, and building interpersonal trust. From the literature, two models are considered, one for formation of large teams and another for establishing an egalitarian culture in a hierarchy. The theoretical position to examine the case study from is a combination of the four areas and the two models. The conclusions emphasise the need for leadership and facilitation to deal with the issues of behaviour; charade of cooperation; homogeneity and heterogeneity; effects of power, particularly on trust; group size paradox; and creating open discussion. The thesis argues, in this context, culture is akin to organisational identity and it examines how culture might be changed and sustained in a strict hierarchical organisation to ensure open discussion where all opinions are equal. The thesis identifies the fundamental importance of interpersonal trust for large informational or consultative teams that hold a different culture to their host organisation. In conclusion, the thesis argues that the models examined do not provide an adequate framework for this case study and tentatively puts forward a 7-factor model representing the conditions required to establish an egalitarian team in a military hierarchy.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom's Royal Air Force is a complex, geographically dispersed large organisation that is a part of a complex system of organisations that make up the whole of the structure of Defence for the UK. The Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was designed to be a cross-functional, consultative team consisting of the most senior officers in the Service regardless of where or for whom they worked. The Senior Leadership Team was first established in February 2007 by the then Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshall Sir Glenn Torpy. The author of the Thesis, the Head of the Royal Air Force Leadership Centre, facilitated the Team.

This introduction will set out the research question and the aims and objectives of the study. It will state the value of the study before briefly summarising the context within which the study was undertaken. The introduction will go on to outline the literature review, the research methodology, the analysis of the data gathered before giving a concise account of the conclusions of the Thesis.

The research was conducted from the establishment of the Senior Leadership Team in February 2007 until September 2009. The Senior Leadership Team was large, consisting of some thirty four people at its inception. Its purpose was to allow Sir Glenn Torpy, the head of the Royal Air Force, to gather opinion and ideas, knowledge and expertise from all areas of Defence, as well as across all the functions of the Royal

Air Force (Torpy, 2007), as many of the Team were placed in Defence functions outside the Royal Air Force (see Chapter 2). The Senior Leadership Team is unique in the history of the Service. This thesis will argue it has been successful in meeting its purpose and that an analysis of its establishment and sustainment make a contribution to knowledge in the area of forming and maintaining an egalitarian team in a hierarchy. The research question, aims and objectives were developed to focus the study:

1.1 Research Question

What are the conditions required to establish an egalitarian team in a military hierarchy?

1.2 Aim of Study

Taking the case study of the Senior Leadership Team to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions to create and sustain a strategic, cross functional, leadership team, where all views are considered equal, within a military hierarchy.

1.3 Objectives of Study

- Conduct a critical review of the literature in the relevant fields of theory to identify, if possible, an appropriate conceptual framework through which to analyse the Senior Leadership Team experience.
- Use the Senior Leadership Team as a single case study, identify the key success factors in the team building and functioning phases, and compare to the conceptual framework identified through the Literature Review.

- Draw conclusions on theory from the study for the practitioner community.
- Identify areas for further study.

1.4

Value of Study

A team where all views are considered equal is counter to the traditional culture of strict military hierarchy and functional compartmentalisation that prevails in the Royal Air Force. Whilst a hierarchical and compartmentalised culture supports and facilitates the concept of military command (DCDC, 2008, Creveld, 1985), there are those (Osborne, 1993, Moon and Norris, 2005, Blau, 1956) that argue that something is lost in such an organisation, both in the optimisation of its human capital, and its operational effectiveness. In particular, and taking a wider view, such structures and culture predominate in the public sector (Osborne, 1993, Barzelay and Armajani, 1992, Osborne and Gaebler, 1992), and preclude the benefits that flow from the close teamwork these authors claim can be achieved outside a strict bureaucratic hierarchy. Indeed, the UK Ministry of Defence is currently undergoing a Transformation programme that calls for a much higher level of integrated operations (Levene, 2011) and the Royal Air Force's own latest changes to its headquarters operating model, the Capability and Structures Review, also requires much greater levels of cross organisational working (Young, 2012).

If the research demonstrates that some issues faced by teams operating across many functions and within a hierarchy have been identified and it finds some potential solutions to those issues. If it allows other practitioners to see the value of those

solutions and shows how they might be implemented in other hierarchies, then the research has given a contribution to knowledge. The value is enhanced by the unique nature of the study into a top military team. Within the organisation, the research is valuable if, in setting up the Senior Leadership Team, it satisfies the reasons for which it was created. In other words, if it is considered successful by its leader and members, it is valuable.

1.5 Context

The context of the research is set out in greater detail in Chapter 2 while summarised here. The Royal Air Force is a very hierarchical organisation with 10 ranks in its commissioned officer corps. A large organisation of about 40,000 personnel (Gower, 2009) it was also spread across the entire country with significant numbers of personnel based abroad. The Royal Air Force deliberately sets out to induce significant loyalty in its personnel to itself. The training of its personnel and the arrangement of its functions creates further loyalties to work specialisations and aircraft types and so forth within it. The rivalry produced between these loyalty groups can be counter-productive (Kirke, 2012). These loyalties, and the friendship groups formed within them, continue right up into the top echelons of the Service.

1.6

Literature Review

The critical review of the literature in Chapter 3 will examine the fields of theory considered relevant to the case study examined through the lens of the research question. It will focus on the area of forming and sustaining a team. It will also examine the interlinked issues of culture change, power and trust.

1.6.1 Changing Culture

Organisational culture is taken to be something acquired by groups as a way of making sense of the world in which they exist. As such it is something akin to the definition of organisational identity from the field of Social Identity Theory (Cornelissen et al., 2007).

Within other walks of life the development of flat structures has been attempted and commented upon widely (eg: Osborne, 1993, Barzelay and Armajani, 1992, Fairtlough, 2007b, Osborne and Plastrik, 1998, Pinchot and Pinchot, 1994). None of these, however, was an attempt to create any sort of flat structure within a hierarchy without dismantling the latter. The one exception was Fairtlough's (2007a) description of Browne's creation of a different type of structure within a division of BP. This was relatively short lived as Browne subsequently became the head of BP and changed the rest of the organisation to match his original division. The change was, in part, done to set up a culture that understood, and was committed to, the '*long-term interests of the organization*' (Fairtlough, 2007c: 73). Yet subsequently BP suffered from many environmental disasters that seemed to uncover a culture that viewed risk

in a way that was not in the long-term interests of the company. Of note, Browne had to use his hierarchical power to set up the different type of organisation within BP.

The broad conclusion from the literature review would be that organisational culture can be changed though it is done by sweeping away the old and continually reinforcing the new (eg: Osborne, 1993, Hofstede, 1993, Barzelay and Armajani, 1992, Osborne and Plastrik, 1998). There are some who dispute the efficacy of this, maintaining that it is better to go for incremental change (eg: Fredrickson, 1996), but they do not claim to rid the organisation of hierarchy or bureaucracy. To maintain a flat or flatter structure within a hierarchy would follow the example of BP to a certain extent. It differs in the important respect that there was, and remains, no intention of changing the external hierarchy and those in the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team are also members of that hierarchy. To allow such a dual culture to operate needs a well formed team, strong leadership, a reason for the different culture, and trust within the Team that the different behaviours required in each culture would not affect the prospects of the members.

1.6.2 Trust

There is a large body of literature on trust though many fewer writings on interpersonal trust. The majority look at trust between (mostly commercial) organisations or between individuals and organisations. In his thesis, Coleman (2009) found no writings that looked at what to do to increase trust. He concluded that the mundane everyday actions were important. However, one piece of research was found that was significantly different. Hurley's (2006) model details seven areas:

- Security,
- Number of similarities,
- Alignment of interests,
- Benevolent concern,
- Capability,
- Predictability and integrity,
- Level of communication (Hurley, 2006: 58)

that someone wishing to be trusted more can work on. This was used as a guide to move the meetings of the Senior Leadership Team forward.

Though trust can be built in ‘virtual’ organisations and interactions (see for example Nir, 2010), there was no guarantee that various members of the Senior Leadership Team would interact because of the segmented and silo type nature of the Royal Air Force and Defence. Furthermore, there was no way to ensure that within such ‘virtual’ interactions the exercise of power was, and was perceived to be, benign.

1.6.3 Power

Power is best conceived as a relationship (Grint, 2005, Bratton et al., 2005) and both the followers and leaders need to acquiesce in its use. The use of power will always affect the relationship between people, and its non-benevolent use will degrade or destroy any trust built up between them (Hurley, 2006). The presence of power will also induce certain behaviours in a team. Some will react in a way to enhance their own standing and prospects to the detriment of others, even if they are

perceived to be acting in concert with the team to start with (Jaques, 1990). The behaviour of others will always be tainted with the suspicion of ulterior motives. The literature review confirmed the interrelated nature of power and trust. The need to guard against the effects of power within a team was also confirmed.

1.6.4 Teams

There is a wealth of literature on the development of teams in general and senior teams in particular (eg: Sheard et al., 2009, Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2009, Levrau and Berghe, 2009). This is concentrated on small, top, decision-making teams of less than ten people. Indeed, these authors would not count larger groups of people as teams. Two authors in particular do consider large groups to be capable of being described as a team (Handy, 1993, Wageman et al., 2008). Handy does not detail the process or conditions necessary for forming a large team though Wageman et al do. They require five things for the formation of a team:

1. The need for a team.
2. A clear purpose.
3. The right composition.
4. The right structure, support and coaching.
5. Leadership.

However, their analysis is based for the most part on the small, top decision making teams not the large ones though they imply that the criteria are the same. Careful analysis of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was needed to see if they did hold true.

From the analysis of the literature, it is argued that the criterion for the right composition in the Wageman et al's team formation framework above needs modification for large teams. They demand that exclusion is necessary to ensure the right behaviours within the team. For a large team, inclusion is necessary to ensure that every area that the team is supposed to reach is included; the purpose of the team would not otherwise be fulfilled. As inclusion would import the behaviours to the team that, in the small team, this criterion is designed to prevent, facilitation is then necessary to deal with the behaviours.

Facilitation would also be necessary to deal with another issue of a large team, the group size paradox (Esteban and Ray, 2001). Because a different culture was to be created in the Senior Leadership Team, interpersonal trust was required so that they knew the behaviours desired for the culture within the Team, different than that required outside it, would not adversely affect their careers in the wider organisation.

1.7 Research Methodology

1.7.1 Epistemology and Ontology

The positivist stance within the social sciences would advocate the application of the methods of the natural scientist to discover the external reality of social interaction (Bryman, 2004). However, when facing the problem of theoretical issues that cannot be directly observed, 'cause' is replaced by interpreting social action to create an understanding of it (Bryman, 2004: 13).

Additionally, in live rather than experimental situations where not all, if any, variables can be controlled, Interpretivism is the stance that should be taken as an explanation for action is all that can be found, not a compelling reason (Bryman, 2004). Even if all the variables within the fast paced and highly complex, live situations of senior leadership teams could be controlled, the validity of experiments could be called into question (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). For this research, with its unusual, privileged access to a top team, control of variables was not possible and the epistemology was, by necessity, interpretivist.

A constructivist rather than objectivist ontology follows this epistemology. We might be observing some external objective reality but we cannot know that we are. We can only make the best interpretation of the observations seen and so present a specific account of what is happening rather than a definitive one. It will always be open to subsequent interpretation, especially if circumstances or influences come to light that have not been observed hitherto. Some would go further and say that, as human relations are the main drivers of the science, constructionism is the only ontology that applies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002).

1.7.2 Axiology

The value of the research is bound up in its usefulness. If the social phenomena that one particular senior leadership team constructed were helpful to that team, then it follows that those social phenomena **may** be helpful to another team. Knowing how one team achieved that construction of social phenomena may help another also achieve a similar and equally helpful construction. Avoiding social constructions that

may not be helpful is a useful application of the knowledge. The wisdom thus acquired is valuable for itself (Kvanvig, 1998).

The value of the research is increased because of the uniqueness of the study of a senior military team. The case study of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team demonstrates a class of problems identified and practical ideas implemented that address those problems. It has contributed to the body of knowledge on establishing a large senior leadership team in a hierarchy.

The Team has been considered successful to both its leader and its members. Its success means that it has satisfied the need for a team perceived by both its leader and members. It has, therefore, provided value for the organisation.

1.7.3 Research Methods

The researcher was one of the facilitators for the meetings of the Senior Leadership Team and a member of the same organisation, thus the research follows that of the participant observer. It is also akin to the action research in the tradition of Revans (1980) following the accepted cycle or spiral form where the action plan goes from taking stock of what is going on, identifying a concern, thinking of a possible way forward, trying it out, monitoring the action to see what is happening, evaluating the progress, modifying the practice and moving in a new direction (Susman and Evered, 1978: 588, Herr and Anderson, 2005: 23, McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 8,9).

The researcher had unprecedented access to the meetings of the Senior Leadership Team and the field notes of these meetings, mostly taken at the time with

a few additional notes made immediately after the relevant meeting, constitute the main source of data for the research. There were two opportunities that arose to interview the members of the Senior Leadership Team. Brief notes of the first opportunity were made during and immediately after the interviews and provided another source of data. One year later, another opportunity arose to interview the majority of the members of the Team again. The majority of these were taped and transcribed and at the few that were not taped, extensive notes were taken. The interviews became the second major source of data for the research.

There was also a questionnaire survey that provided quantitative data for the research. The questionnaire was designed specifically for the Senior Leadership Team by the Royal Air Force Transformation Team and administered by the organisation's occupational psychologist. This survey was run on three occasions in 2007, 2008 and 2009.

In essence, there were three sources of data, observations of all the Senior Leadership Team meetings as well as some office calls with certain members of the Team, two sets of interviews and a questionnaire. These sources produced both qualitative and quantitative data. Content analysis was used on the qualitative data looking for themes occurring across interviews and observations while the quantitative data gave some statistical analysis. Having both quantitative and qualitative data allowed some triangulation between these two types as well as triangulation within the qualitative data sets.

1.7.4 Ethics

The risk of bias in a study conducted by a single participant-observer is always an issue. In this case, the use of independent audio-typists prevented any unintended interpretation of what was said in the interviews as it was typed out or notes taken. As themes were identified, the researcher continuously asked the question: “if I was biased, what would I be ignoring?” The data was then re-searched to see if that theme could be identified in either the qualitative or quantitative data. As the data analysis unfolded, it was given to the thesis committee for their comment and opinion. Finally, Chapter 4 includes a detailed self analysis of the researcher’s motivation; the critical reflexivity required for action research (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006, Herr and Anderson, 2005).

The design phase of the research considered the ethics issues in line with the Economic and Social Research Council Framework for Research Ethics. The anonymity of the participants has been respected and no member of the Team identified. The permission of the participants was sought at interview. Though occasional pressure was brought to bear for the researcher to divulge some of the information to senior officers, this was resisted and workarounds found to deal with the situation to the satisfaction of those officers and maintaining the integrity of the research. The research also complied with the Ministry of Defence guidelines for such research (MoDREC, 2010: para 8, sub para g).

Chapter 5 will set out in detail the analysis of the data gathered against the framework for forming large senior teams that was arrived at in the Literature Review as well as that for establishing a different culture within the team. From the data it will be seen that the first meeting of the Senior Leadership Team had three catalysts helping it into being, the need to increase trust up and down the command chains to improve the working of Mission Command, the acknowledged poor behaviours of some of the air marshals¹, and the desire of Sir Glenn Torpy, the Chief of the Air Staff, to harness the intellect and wider perspectives of all his air marshals for the better running of the Royal Air Force. At the end of the first meeting, Sir Glenn Torpy stated to the Team that he liked working in the way that had been devised for the Team and wished to continue to do so (Jupp, 2004a).

With the added spur of the need for the Senior Leadership Team from the Royal Air Force Transformation programme, the Team met for the second time four months later in June 2007. This time, the meeting was held out of uniform and different facilitation methods used to improve on the outcomes from the first meeting following the action learning cycle (Herr and Anderson, 2005). The Team also developed their own set of group or team norms which became the Senior Leadership Team Manifesto (Torpy, 2007). Just as Wageman et al (2008) required in their formation of senior leadership teams, this was done by discussion amongst the Team not imposed by the leader. The Team also agreed on the frequency of their future

¹ 'air marshals' is a collective term for all Air Vice Marshals, Air Marshals, and Air Chief Marshals.

meetings (Jupp, 2007a). The Team continued to meet throughout the period of the research and is still meeting in the summer of 2013 as this research is being written up. The longevity of the Team is an indication of its usefulness to the organisation.

The Literature Review concluded that to form a large team five things were necessary:

1. The need for a team.
2. A clear purpose.
3. The right composition.
4. The right structure, support and coaching.
5. Leadership.

It also indicated that the issues of power, changing culture and creating interpersonal trust would need to be attended to.

1.8.1 Forming the Team

The leader of the organisation wanted to work in a team fulfilling the first part of this criterion as laid down by Wageman et al (2008). The need for the Team was also reflected in the views of the Team.

The literature review noted that the clarity of purpose for the Team would need constant attention and would take considerable time. The case study of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team confirmed this. Despite the clarity of purpose set out in their Manifesto, Team members continued to question what the meetings were about. This uncertainty was reflected in the quantitative data where this had a

positive score, but only just so, though it did improve (Elliott-Mabey, 2009). There was also uncertainty in purpose caused by a change of leader towards the end of the research period, reflected in both the qualitative and quantitative data. The latter showed a distinct drop at this period. Clarity of purpose required constant effort but the effort did produce results.

The right composition of the team was different to the literature for the Senior Leadership Team. Driving this point is the desire of the leader of the Team to harness the views of all his talented, senior people. He wanted opinion from all areas of Defence in which his air marshals worked; therefore, they all had to be included. As the Team was, in part, set up to deal with behaviour change, it did not seek to exclude bad behaviour but to confront it. As such, the Manifesto (Torpy, 2007) makes clear that membership of the Team is automatic on promotion to air vice marshal. The qualitative and quantitative data both showed that behaviours were an issue within the Team but that strong leadership and facilitation were effective in dealing with them. As the composition of the Team necessarily made a large team, the problem of the group size paradox (Esteban and Ray, 2001) arose. Various facilitation methods were shown to be effective in dealing with this.

The fourth criterion of the right support, structure and coaching for forming a senior leadership team was also evidenced in the case study. Sufficient administrative support was provided. Much attention was spent on the agenda as part of the structure of the Team. First, to ensure that the members of the Team considered the meetings sufficiently important for them to attend. Secondly, to ensure that the

meetings were focused on the strategic issues facing the organisation. Though what the right strategic issues were was frequently contested. On two occasions the agenda was changed from the one that the leader of the Team originally wanted.

The structure of the Team also impinged on the culture of it. A team where all views were equal was required and this needed some of the hierarchical nature of the organisation to be suspended. The data showed that this was achieved. It also demonstrated that this was not perfect and that constant work was needed in this area, especially with the naturally changing membership of the Team. Lastly in this criterion was the coaching. (Wageman et al (2008) use 'coaching' to mean a form of general one-to-one support rather than a more formal definition as in 'executive coaching'.) The literature claimed that this should be done by the leader of the team. However, in the case study, the leader of the Senior Leadership Team could not deliver all the coaching needed for such a large team. He did hold many one-to-one meetings with the members of his team. Induction meetings with the facilitator for new members, coaching offered by the external facilitator, and executive coaching were all used to fulfil this need.

The fifth criterion for forming a senior leadership team was strong leadership. The evidence for this criterion was, itself, strong. It required strong leadership for the Team to come into being in the first place. The Team themselves required there to be strong leadership. Several meetings needed strong leadership to keep them on the right track. In addition to the facilitation, leadership was needed for the less-hierarchical culture to be maintained.

1.8.2 Power

The various forms of power described in the literature such as position, formal, legitimate, and referent power (French and Raven, 1959b, Mintzberg, 1983, Handy, 1993, Bratton et al., 2005) were all apparent in the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team. Every effort was made during the meetings, right from the start of the Senior Leadership Team, to ameliorate the adverse effect of power. It was, however, shown to be possible to ameliorate these by the careful selection of settings outside normal working environments, the removal of ostensible badges of rank, and facilitation techniques that played down its effect or emphasised its benevolent use. That the issue of power was always there, and that it played into the building of interpersonal trust, was also evident.

1.8.3 Changing Culture

The research likened culture to a system of shared meaning (Cornelissen et al., 2007) and looked to change culture within the Team to allow an equality of views to be expressed. That one member initially considered that giving too radical a view would be detrimental to his career and another saw that cooperative behaviours would be very hard to achieve in a competitive hierarchy, demonstrates that for the Senior Leadership Team to work the culture would have to change. Both the qualitative and the quantitative data showed that there were improvements in this area with several members of the Team expressing that they felt that there was a free and open exchange of views. The questionnaire responses showed a significant improvement over time in the factors of open communication and team-working. The somewhat

paradoxical nature of the egalitarian requirements of working in the Team contrasting with the strict hierarchical nature of the organisation was also recognised. The irony being that the case study also demonstrated the need for strong leadership and constant effort to maintain this cultural difference.

1.8.4 Trust

The body of literature on trust in general is large, though that on interpersonal trust is much smaller (see for example McAllister, 1995a, Coleman, 2009). Though Coleman looks at how trust builds through mundane everyday actions he does not go into what these everyday actions are or how to promote them. Hurley (2006) identified ten factors affecting the building of trust of which the last seven were malleable by those wishing to be trusted. The meetings of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team deliberately set out to work on these factors in an effort to promote trust between its members. The qualitative data from observation and interview show that the effort of the Senior Leadership Team was successful over time in this regard and the quantitative data (Elliott-Mabey, 2009) reinforces this.

One further aspect on trust was noted in the literature review and confirmed by the research. All the literature examined that went into the affective domain of trust rather than just the cognitive domain, saw the affective domain as something that was reached after considerable time (see for example McAllister, 1995a, Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). One author (Mayer et al., 1995) looked at the affective domain as in a person's propensity to trust another but none looked at the emotional judgement made of another at the start of a relationship, something that is made very quickly

indeed (see for example Goleman, 1995, Seal et al., 2006). The research confirmed that the affective domain of trust was at work throughout the effort to increase interpersonal trust but more work is necessary to support the hypothesis arising out of the work on emotional intelligence that first impressions are important in the formation of trust and the affective domain has to be worked on from the very beginning of a relationship.

1.9 Conclusions

Chapter 6 will draw together the conclusions from the study. A short summary is given here. The research question set out at the start of the thesis was:

What are the conditions required to establish an egalitarian team in a military hierarchy?

Though there is a large body of literature on teams the majority of that on senior teams is on small, decision-making teams and boards. The closest literature to the case study of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was that of Wageman et al (2008) with their 5-point model for forming a senior leadership team.

This research demonstrates that the case study of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team does follow closely Wageman et al's model in most respects but that it diverges from it in some important ways. All five points in the model are important. While Wageman et al exclude any potential member of the team who may not behave in the way intended, for a large consultative and informational team to work, all those

who need to be consulted and from, or to, whom information is necessary, need to be included.

The research also showed that in a team the size of the Senior Leadership Team, which had some 34 members, the leader of the team cannot service all the one-to-one needs, the coaching (in Wageman et al's (2008) terms), of the members. Some of this had to be done by the facilitators or other professional coaching. Strong leadership is required, and for the Senior Leadership Team this was, ironically, the more apparent because of the new, less hierarchical, culture being developed in the Team. Where the culture in the team is different from the culture in the organisation in which the team exists, the research suggests that more is required than just the 5 points of Wageman et al's model.

The literature review extended the search beyond the formation of teams into the effects of power, changing culture and building trust as those areas were thought to be necessary to understand in order to build the Senior Leadership Team in the desired image. The data from the case study showed that power was at play within the Team. It confirmed that power is better conceived as a relationship as both superordinates and subordinates have to acquiesce in its use (Bratton et al., 2005, Grint, 2005). It also demonstrated that leadership and facilitation can ameliorate its effects in a large team so that open and equal discussions can be had.

Taking culture to mean a system of shared meaning akin to organisational identity (Cornelissen et al., 2007), the research showed that a culture different to that of the main organisation could be created. At the inception of the Team, members

were wary of openly expressing radical views and there were tendencies to follow the views of the more senior members of the Team. With constant effort of strong leadership and facilitation these issues lessened and the Team noticeably began to freely express opinions. The culture of the Team had changed. Somewhat paradoxically, it seems that strong leadership, almost an imposition of hierarchical power, is needed to lessen the hierarchy, similar to Browne's experience at BP (Fairtlough, 2007b).

The research looked at building interpersonal trust within the Team to ensure that its members felt safe to express their own views. It demonstrated that this can be done by concentrating on the malleable factors in Hurley's (2006) model of how to generate trust and by the everyday actions of face-to-face meetings (Coleman, 2009). Both the qualitative and quantitative data showed that trust did build and contributed to the openness of discussions.

The research demonstrated that it is possible for a relatively egalitarian team to be created in a military hierarchy. At least a team was created where every view in a large team can be heard and members felt safe to express themselves freely. The Team was maintained for the two and a half years of the period of the observation, surviving a change of leader and continued to be maintained for a further period of three and a half years at the completion of writing in the summer of 2013. It has not yet ceased. Its longevity demonstrates that it is successful in meeting the needs of the leader of the Team. Members attitude to attendance also indicate that it is successful in meeting the needs of Team members.

When a large, cross functional, consultative and informational team, that requires all the top members of a hierarchy to be members, is formed and maintained this research of a single empirical test tentatively suggests Wageman et al's (2008) five point model may need to be modified. The third criterion should be changed so that all the relevant members are included and the issues of doing so dealt with. The behaviours imported to the team will need strong leadership and facilitation. Within the support to the team, it should be acknowledged that the leader of the team cannot provide all the coaching or one-to-one maintenance required, facilitators and professional coaches will be needed to provide additional support. Added to the five points, the issues of power inherent in a hierarchy have to be attended to. Interpersonal trust has to be built so that behaviours acceptable within the team are not seen to be detrimental to careers in the wider organisation.

This research has contributed to theory by showing that Wageman et al's (2008) hypothesis of 5-points that are needed to form a large senior leadership team need to be modified to be generalisable across a large egalitarian team in a military hierarchy. A seven-point model can be tentatively put forward to cover this aspect as follows:

- the need for a team;
- a clear purpose;
- the right composition (*excluding or including members depending on the size and nature of the team*);
- the right structure, support, coaching *and facilitation*;

- strong leadership;
- *a compelling reason for a different culture;*
- *great trust.*

The concluding chapter of the thesis will also reflect on the research itself and suggest areas for further research. More research is required to confirm that the tentative reshaping of Wageman et al's five point model for a large team suggested by this research holds true elsewhere. It is also required to define what constitutes a large team in this respect. This research noted that the affective domain of trust was active from the beginning of a relationship of trust but more research is required to understand this. Equally well, this research postulated that a competition for resources may affect trust but found no evidence to support this, so research would be required to find if this holds true. The Senior Leadership Team was started in part to help build trust up and down the command chains so that the practice of Mission Command could be improved in the organisation. The scope of this research did not cover trust up and down the command chain nor whether, if it had improved, this affected Mission Command. The irony that strong leadership is required to reduce the hierarchical culture in the Team would suggest that more research in this area is also required.

The next chapter of this thesis sets out the context of the research in greater detail before the literature is reviewed to look closely at the four areas of team formation, power, changing culture and interpersonal trust. After which the research methodology will be examined before the data from the case study of the Senior

Leadership Team is studied. From the literature review and the case study, areas for further study will be identified.

Chapter 2

THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

This Chapter will explain how the thesis was derived. It will explain the relevant parts of the Royal Air Force as an organisation that led to the formation of the Senior Leadership Team in the first place and which would always impinge on the effort to change behaviours and outcomes that was the purpose of the Senior Leadership Team. Falling out from that, it is necessary to understand the background to the formation of the Senior Leadership Team and why it was formed at the time it was, and what the original intentions for it were. The sources of data for the research are discussed in Chapter 4, the Research Methodology, Methods and Design. The form of the research, action learning (Revans, 1980) and participant research (Bryman, 2004) are debated and the form of the meetings of the Team introduced. The meeting sequence is set out in more detail in Chapter 5, the Analysis of the Data.

2.1 The Royal Air Force as an Organisation and the Context for the Senior Leadership Team

At the time the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was formed, in February 2007, the Royal Air Force was an organisation of about 40,000 personnel. It was also an organisation that was shrinking and under considerable financial stress, in common with Defence as a whole. The numbers in the Royal Air Force were programmed to reduce from a previous level of about 45,000 to about 38,300 (Gower,

2009, DASA, 2012) with the possibility of further reductions, while the pressure to reduce the cost of the equipment programme for the Royal Air Force and Defence was intense. Against this background, the Service was effectively at war both in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as holding its usual operational commitments both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere across the world, not least in the Falkland Islands (AIR, 2008).

2.2 Rank and Branch Structure of the Royal Air Force

The rank structure of the Royal Air Force is a strict hierarchy with eighteen layers, nine within the non-commissioned ranks and ten within the commissioned officer corps:

Non-Commissioned Ranks	Commissioned Ranks
Warrant Officer	Air Chief Marshal
Flight Sergeant	Air Marshal
Chief Technician	Air Vice Marshal
Sergeant	Air Commodore
Corporal	Group Captain
Junior Technician	Wing Commander
Senior Aircraftsman	Squadron Leader
Leading Aircraftsman	Flight Lieutenant
Aircraftsman	Flying Officer
	Pilot Officer

Table 1 Ranks of the Royal Air Force (RAF, 2012 Royal Air Force Ranks)

All officer entrants to the Royal Air Force enter the Service at the Royal Air Force College Cranwell. All commissioned officers go through the same induction course – Initial Officer Training – and start their careers at the same rank. All officers must join at the bottom and those who reach the most senior ranks of air commodore and above must work their way through all the ranks to get there. This process takes at least 20 years.

Royal Air Force commissioned officers are recruited into one of five major Branches of broadly grouped specialisations: aircrew, engineers, administrators,

operations support personnel, and the supply branch or one of the specialist branches of doctors, dentists, nurses, lawyers and padres. Each of the major branches is further subdivided; the aircrew branch for example covers pilots and navigators; the administration branch covers secretariat, training, and physical education, and so on for the other main Branches. Overall, including all the non-commissioned trades, there are nearly seventy specialisations in the Royal Air Force. Every recruit, on completion of their common initial training goes on to do their specialist training, these specialisations engender considerable esprit-de-corps and loyalty to themselves additional to the ethos and loyalty to the Royal Air Force that the initial training is designed to bring out (Archer, 2004). More recent research shows that each branch develops its own culture in early training and '*engenders deep seated attitudes, expectations and assumptions amounting stereotypes*' of other groups and Branches (Kirke, 2012: 3).

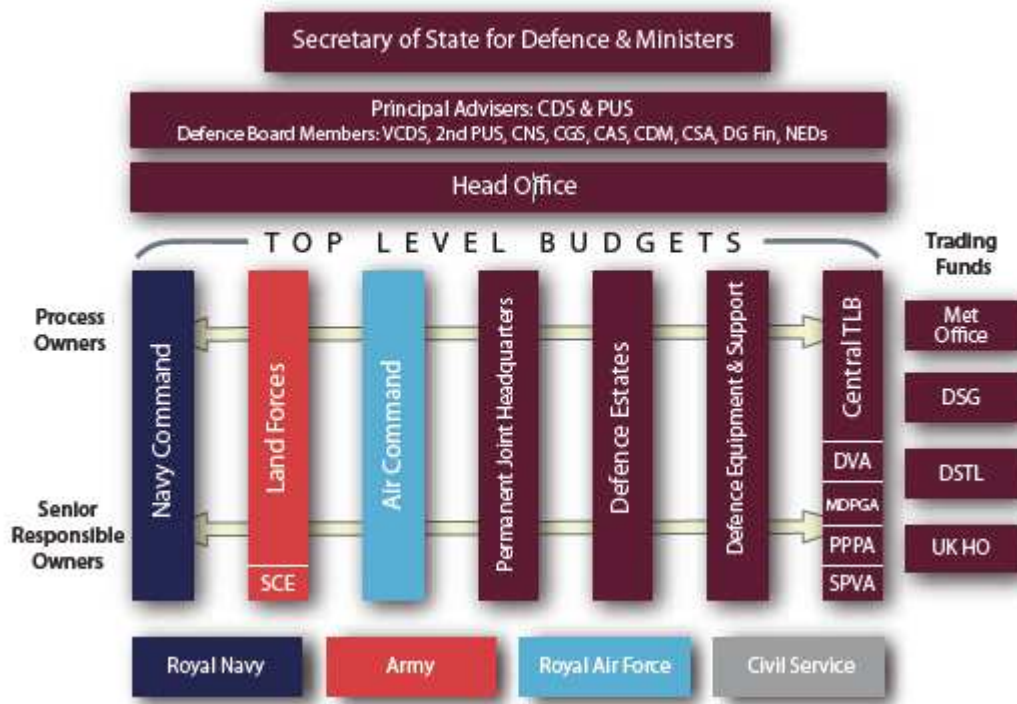
2.3 The Royal Air Force within Defence

The Royal Air Force is also a very geographically dispersed organisation. The majority of its personnel live and work on the flying stations and other specialist units distributed through the Country from northern Scotland to Cornwall, with some serving on the few remaining bases abroad, such as RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus and RAF Gibraltar and others manning the operations throughout the world. Just before the time the Senior Leadership Team was formed, the Royal Air Force had two geographically split headquarters, one dealing with personnel and training issues near Gloucester, HQ Personnel and Training Command at RAF Innsworth, and the other

dealing with operations situated near High Wycombe, HQ Strike Command at RAF High Wycombe; however, these two headquarters were being co-located at the end of 2006 to make efficiencies by sharing back office services. In 2007, they were properly amalgamated as part of the Royal Air Force Transformation programme (the Royal Air Force Transformation programme is briefly explained at the end of this Chapter).

In 2007 a total of 350 Royal Air Force officers were working in the Ministry of Defence in London (Williams, 2012). Of these, a small number would have been working under the Royal Air Force's top officer, the Chief of the Air Staff, the majority were working in tri-Service appointments, working for Defence rather than solely for any of the single Services. In addition, more personnel work for the Defence Equipment and Support organisation, another Defence rather than single Service organisation, located mainly in Bristol, Bath and Huntingdon (see Figure 1) below. All-in-all, the second most senior Royal Air Force officer estimated that some 25% of Royal Air Force personnel were working for organisations other than the Royal Air Force (Jupp, 2006). Amongst more senior officers, this proportion increased and within the Senior Leadership Team itself, less than half were working directly for the Royal Air Force (Ross, 2008c). An examination of the operating model for Defence at Figure 1 shows the breadth and complexity of the overall organisation of Defence and where the Royal Air Force fits into the structure. Air Command covers all the areas of the Royal Air Force where personnel work directly for the Service, while all the purple coloured areas are populated by personnel from all three Services, the Civil Service and, from the Defence Board upwards, politicians. The model shows the way the

Defence was organised in 2010 and had been organised during the period of the research prior to the reforms instituted by the Levene Review (Levene, 2011).



Key

CDS	Chief of the Defence Staff	SCE	Service Children's Education
PUS	Permanent Secretary	DVA	Defence Vetting Agency
VCDS	Vice Chief of the Defence Staff	MDPGA	MOD Police and Guarding Agency
2nd PUS	Second Permanent Secretary	PPPA	People, Pay and Pensions Agency
CNS	Chief of the Naval Staff	SPVA	Service Personnel and Veterans Agency
CGS	Chief of the General Staff	DSG	Defence Support Group
CAS	Chief of the Air Staff	DSTL	Defence Science and Technology Laboratory
CDM	Chief of Defence Materiel	UK HO	UK Hydrographic Office
CSA	Chief Scientific Adviser	TLB	Top Level Budget
DG Fin	Director General Finance		
NEDs	Non-Executive Directors		

Figure 1 Defence Operating Model (Ministry of Defence Ministry, 2010)

The geographical dispersion further divided loyalties and views, and perceptions were different depending on which part of the larger Defence organisation

personnel worked for (Kirke, 2012). This was exacerbated by the career patterns of officers who, in the early parts of their careers, generally worked in a small part of the overall organisation. Their friendship groups formed in that part of the organisation and did not expand much beyond that throughout their career. The silo effect created and maintained by the specialisations in the Royal Air Force reached right up into the top thirty four officers of the Royal Air Force – the Senior Leadership Team, one member commenting that many of the Team outside the network he had grown up with he hardly knew at all (Jupp, 2008a: 192). The through career leadership education programme designed for the Royal Air Force officers in 2004 specifically brought officers together from all parts of the Service to break down some of the silo effects (AMP, 2004).

2.4 Formation of the Senior Leadership Team

In 2003 the Royal Air Force Board decided that it needed to form a Leadership Centre to develop leadership better throughout the Service (AMP, 2003 Developing Excellence in Leadership). Out of this initiative, the principal objective for the leadership development within the Royal Air Force was to get all personnel to learn the principles of and use properly the philosophy of Mission Command (AMP, 2004).

In essence Mission Command requires that subordinates acquire an understanding of a higher commander's intentions and what it is they have to do within his or her plan. This is to enable them to carry out missions with the maximum of freedom and authority to use appropriate resources. As British Defence Doctrine

states, this *'requires trust, shared awareness and common understanding'* (DCDC, 2008: 5-4). For Mission Command to work there needs to be a great level of trust both up and down the command chain (Yardley and Kakabadse, 2007, Bungay, 2005, Macey, 1998, Yardley, 2006).

Despite the increased understanding from teaching the principles of Mission Command across all leadership courses in the Service, evidence began to emerge that while Mission Command seemed to work well on operations it did not do so in the non-operational sphere of work in the United Kingdom. The Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Glenn Torpy, noted this on his tours of operations and the United Kingdom bases (Jupp, 2004b) as well as the feedback coming from those more junior officers on leadership courses. Every level of the hierarchy stated some form of the same story; while they themselves used Mission Command those above (and below) them did not.

2.5 Lack of Trust in the Command Chain

There could be many explanations for this phenomenon such as the more senior in a hierarchy trying to maintain superiority of intelligence (Dowding, 1941). However, because **every** level was apparently saying the same, that while they used Mission Command those above them did not, a more likely underlying cause was a lack of trust in those more senior not to blame respondents if genuine mistakes were to be made and so prejudice their career. The Haddon-Cave report into a major aircraft accident which called for the creation of a 'Just Culture' (Hadden-Cave, 2008) reinforces this view.

The perceived lack of trust in those most senior was the most difficult problem to address. All those up to and including the group captains were having some form of leadership education programme by 2007 and could be reassured that their senior officers up to that level were beginning to understand the need to generate trust up and down the command chain. The immediate bosses of the group captains about to take command, the future station commanders, were air vice marshals and they did not have any leadership education programme at that point. The perception of trust in air vice marshals by the personnel immediately below them was not good (Elliott-Mabey, 2007) nor could these subordinates be reassured that the air vice marshals had a programme to help them understand the need to generate trust in the command chain.

Additionally, if the subordinates perceived that the air marshals did not trust each other, it would be hard for them to repose trust, especially the deep trust necessary for Mission Command to work, in the air marshals themselves. Without that trust, Mission Command was never likely to work outside the operational sphere where the closely scrutinised work of these subordinates was going to be the arbiter of their promotion. Promotion is the single most important reward system in the Royal Air Force as both pay and responsibility are linked to rank and there is no bonus system.

Personnel are promoted by a board of officers who read the annual reports of those eligible to be promoted. The reports are written by the command chain of the officer to be promoted but the board consists of those not in the command chain.

That is, for those wing commanders and group captains who responded to the survey, those sitting on their promotion board would be members of the Senior Leadership Team who were not in their command chain, those air marshals whom they perceived their own air marshal did not trust. The Senior Leadership Team was formed, in part, to increase the trust between the air marshals.

The formation of the Senior Leadership Team had another more important thread. In the second half of 2006 a new the head of the Royal Air Force, Sir Glenn Torpy, was appointed. In the latter part of his career as he moved to the top of the organisation, the majority of his appointments had been in Defence rather than Royal Air Force organisations. During that time he felt he had had an excellent view of his own Service as the wider Defence community saw it, and felt he could have helped those whose responsibility it was to direct the Royal Air Force. However, he was not once asked for his opinion by those air marshals serving in Royal Air Force appointments and he was determined that this would not be the case while he was the Chief (Jupp, 2004b).

The third reason for the formation of the Senior Leadership Team was the awareness of Sir Glenn Torpy that some of his air marshals were not behaving towards each other as they should (Jupp, 2006). The extent of the poor behaviours within the cadre of air marshals was being exacerbated by the co-location of the Royal Air Force's two headquarters. This tipped the balance for Sir Glenn Torpy, and he decided to go ahead with the first meeting of the Senior Leadership Team in February 2007.

2.6

Royal Air Force Transformation

As 2007 progressed, the Royal Air Force Transformation programme became significant. It started in the spring and by the summer it was in full flow. This Programme started as the effort to amalgamate the Royal Air Force's two headquarters, mentioned above, and became in about April of 2007 the 'Royal Air Force Transformation' effort. This was designed to reduce the overheads of Royal Air Force outputs so as to free up capacity to enhance those areas of the Service that were most stretched by the current operational commitments it had (Dye, 2007). The senior officer responsible for the programme, a member the Senior Leadership Team himself, realised that he could not progress an organisational transformation without the full support of all his colleagues at the top of the Service. The Senior Leadership Team became vital to his progressing the Transformation programme (Dye, 2007).

With Royal Air Force Transformation as a partial driver, the Senior Leadership Team met for a second time in June 2007 with an agenda that was principally about Transformation. It also covered how the Team wished to behave and included Sir Glenn Torpy giving his vision of the Team with the Team agreeing the frequency of their meetings. Sir Glenn Torpy subsequently turned this into the Manifesto for the Team (Torpy, 2007). A copy of the Senior Leadership Team Manifesto is at the Appendix A for convenience. The only other known example of an air force senior leadership team similar to the Royal Air Force example was that of the Royal Australian Air Force (Mugford and Rogers, 2005).

2.7

Summary

This Chapter has set out the context within which the research was carried out. The organisation, the Royal Air Force, itself a large, complex and geographically dispersed organisation was also part of the much larger complex organisation that is the whole of Defence coming under its Department of State, the Ministry of Defence. It should be noted that the Ministry of Defence is itself complex, and unique in government, as it operates both as a Department of State and a military strategic headquarters. The Royal Air Force is also a very hierarchical organisation with 10 ranks in its commissioned officer corps, the top three ranks of which formed the Senior Leadership Team.

In addition to its geographical dispersion, the Royal Air Force was also an organisation with many silos and specialisations which created a great deal of rivalry and small friendship groups which extended to the top of the organisation. There was considerable operational, financial, and structural pressure on the Royal Air Force at the time the Senior Leadership Team was formed.

The pressures on the organisation created considerable leadership challenges for those at the top of the Royal Air Force. This was exacerbated by the lack of trust in the command chain and by poor behaviours at the top of the command chain. Sir Glenn Torpy, the new leader of the Royal Air Force, recognised the issues at hand, alongside his own wish to harness the capability of all his air marshals regardless of whether they worked in the Royal Air Force or for wider Defence organisations, and created the Senior Leadership Team to address these issues.

Having set out the context in which the research was carried out, the next chapter will examine the literature in the light of the effort to establish the Senior Leadership Team. Looking for theory and practice that would assist in the action research to deal with the anticipated problems that were thought may arise.

Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the literature review is to examine previous research on sustaining egalitarian teams in a hierarchy in order to develop an analytic framework for the case study of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team (Bryman, 2004). However, there is very little literature specifically on sustaining a flat team in a hierarchy and none on top military teams in this respect. The closest work to these concepts is Gerald Fairtlough's (Fairtlough, 2007a, Fairtlough, 2007b). Though this examines the creation of an alternative organisational form within a hierarchical commercial organisation, this is not sustained for long as the creator becomes head of the whole organisation and changes that too. As with the rest of the literature on hierarchy and bureaucracy, the research concentrates on sweeping it away or, in a few cases, praising it (eg Jaques, 1990, Handy, 1993, Fredrickson, 1996).

This literature review, therefore, looked broadly at the literature on formation of teams and more specifically at that on top teams '*looking for pegs on which to hang [the] findings*' (Bryman, 2004: 527) of the research. Therefore, the literature was searched for an accepted and authoritative framework on how teams, and large, top,

consultative, informational teams in particular, formed to help develop an analytic framework for the case study.

As the previous chapter explained, the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was created for the dual purpose of better informing the Chief of the Air Staff and the Royal Air Force Board so that they could improve decision-making on the Board and as part of the effort to change the culture of the Royal Air Force as a whole by changing the culture of its top 34 or so officers – the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team. If it was successful in creating and sustaining a flat team in a hierarchy, then what was done in its creation and sustainment must hold the clues as to why it was successful. Therefore, the literature review also looked at what other research may be relevant to the research question by examining the pools of literature around the three other phenomena that were actively worked upon in the creation of the Senior Leadership Team: trust, culture change, and power. By cross referring the needs for creating trust, changing culture, and dealing with power with the framework for forming a large team it was intended to find the necessary and sufficient conditions to establish an egalitarian team in a hierarchy.

A broad understanding of these three additional areas was sought. Within the phenomenon of trust, the review focussed on an accepted framework for building interpersonal trust between individuals rather than a model of trust itself. Of the work on culture, the review seeks to understand what it is within the overall concept of culture that is pertinent to the changes sought in the Senior Leadership Team and the elements that can be identified that may change and sustain a different, non-

hierarchical culture within a team to the hierarchical one in the rest of the organisation. While, within the concept of power, the review seeks to identify what effect the use and misuse of power might have on the formation of a team, building interpersonal trust within that team and changing to and maintaining a non-hierarchical culture.

Given the complexity of a large senior team working in a real, live situation rather than a simplified exercise and also given the constructivist philosophy of the research, which is dealt with in Chapter 4, it cannot be stated with any certainty that the concepts of team forming, trust, culture and power are the only ones that affect the creation and maintenance of a flat culture within a hierarchy. They were the only ones that were actively addressed and therefore the literature review was restricted to examining those concepts. It is quite possible that others were in play and any indication that they were will be examined in the analysis of the case study in Chapter 5.

This chapter will argue that the literature on the formation of large teams is lacking. The literature for small, decision making and top teams is comprehensive with detailed models for the process of forming them but the most promising of models in the literature for large teams needs modification for the formation of a large, cross-functional, flat and consultative team in a hierarchy. Within a large team situated within a hierarchy the use of power is always problematic. Its overuse will be counterproductive to the aims of a consultative team inducing, at best, supine

followers. Developing a large consultative team will need constant attention to the use of power for whatever purpose.

The chapter will develop the argument around culture that the literature is confusing with several meanings assigned to the same word, culture. Careful definition of what is meant can be derived using organisational identity from Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974, Cornelisson et al., 2007). With this definition of culture established, to change the culture in a large team to be different from the organisation within which it sits can be seen to require a well formed team, good leadership of the team, great interpersonal trust within the team and a compelling reason for the different culture.

Finally, this chapter will argue that the extensive literature on trust seems lacking in the development of thinking on the affective domain of trust, in particular with the first impression that people inevitably make of others. Acknowledging that this is so, to develop interpersonal trust within the team requires attention to seven malleable factors (Hurley, 2006) that affect it by the everyday actions of its members (Coleman, 2009). This will include the amelioration of the effects of power and the emphasis on the homogeneity within the team. However, more powerful than these will be the destructive effect of systemic issues within the organisation that set team members against each other.

3.2

Teams

The review of the literature on teams revealed differences in the definition of what constituted a team and thus how a team was formed. This research is specifically dealing with large teams so the problems with participation in the work of a team as the size grows were also examined. As the leadership of the team is vital to its strength and purpose this is given a section of its own. Finally, the advantages and disadvantages of homogeneity and heterogeneity within a team, which can be dependent on the purpose of the team, are examined.

3.2.1 Definition of a team

Large organisations are full of teams of one sort or another. So what is a team? One definition separating teams from other groups is:

‘two identifying characteristics of groups are mutual interaction and reciprocal influence. Members of teams also have mutual interaction and reciprocal influence, but we generally distinguish teams from groups in four other ways. First, team members usually have a stronger sense of identification among themselves ... Second, teams have common goals or tasks ... Third, task interdependence typically is greater with teams than with groups ... Fourth, team members often have more differentiated and specialised roles than group members.’ (Hughes et al., 2002: 300-1).

this clearly gives the team something more than the group in the work place. Others agree:

'[A work group is] two or more people who are (1) in a face-to-face interaction, (2) aware of their membership in the group, and (3) striving to accomplish assigned tasks. (Bratton et al., 2005: 257).

Others define a team as a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993).

Kakabadse first defines a team as:

'both a forum for discussion, decision making, and identifying strategies for policy/operational implementation, and as environment – an ambience – which enables or disables the process of discussion, decision making, and implementation.' (Kakabadse, 1991: 59);

it is important to note the emphasis here on decision making. Later, with Sheard et al, Kakabadse makes a much tighter definition of a team and distinguishes clearly between groups and teams and follows Katzenbach and Smith (1993):

'a group [is] two or more individuals, interacting and interdependent, who have come together to achieve a particular objective. The individuals concerned interact primarily to share information and to help one another perform within each member's area of responsibility.'

'a team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.' (Sheard et al., 2009: 144 and 145)

Handy, on the other hand, seems to make no differentiation between a group and a team:

'Organisations use groups or teams and committees ... to bring together a set of skills, talents, responsibilities, and allocate to them their particular duties ... so that the solution to any problem will have all available capacities applied to it ... To pass on information to those who need to know ... To gather ideas ... for increased commitment and involvement.' (Handy, 1993: 151-2).

Handy is saying that any group brought together to maximise the various skills, talents, experience and responsibilities; to pass on information to each other; to gather ideas and to gain increased commitment would be a team. However, the definitions above from Hughes et al and Bratton et al are more restrictive. Both demand that teams have common tasks and a greater sense of belonging. Neither in their own definition define the size limits for a team though Bratton et al do use Katzenbach and Smith's (1993) definition which does limit the size of a team, demanding that it be 'small'. They also define a team by the fact that it has outputs and performance goals for which the team is accountable.

Kakabadse's (1991) first definition seems to take a slightly different route looking at what a team does – discussion, decision-making, identifying strategies for implementation – as well as the environment it provides. No size is mentioned. However, later with Sheard (Sheard et al., 2009) a definite distinction between groups and teams is made with teams being limited in size again. Handy (1993) also looks at the problem through the lens of what teams are used for but does not mention size.

Wageman et al (2008), specifically looking at Senior Leadership Teams, take a different approach to the definition of teams. Here they define four types of team: informational, consultative, coordinating and decision making (Wageman et al., 2008: 36). The purpose of the team, to a certain extent, defines the size of it. Information teams will, necessarily, be larger than decision making ones. Wageman et al (2008) also note the difficulty in making decisions as team size gets larger and advocate an ideal size for a decision-making team around the single figure mark. Teams for the purpose of sharing information, on the other hand, need to be as large as is necessary for the information to get to the parts of the organisation that it is required to do. For Wageman et al (2008), being, for example, thirty four people is no impediment to being a team per se, though for certain purposes such a team will be unwieldy at the very least.

Kakabadse and Kakabadse (2009), Levrau and Berghe (2009), Sheard et al (2009), and Katzenbach and Smith (1993) are all looking at boards or senior work teams just below board level who have specific, hard outputs, eg projects to deliver on time. The first three also consider teams to be decision-making entities. Wageman et al (2008) look at teams at a similar level, specifically senior leadership teams, but consider purposes beyond this strict, hard output level. The former may not consider that the informational or consultative teams of the latter are really teams on the grounds of either size or purpose. Handy's (1993) definition would, though, include them. The Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team would, therefore, be a team according to some but not others. Since they decided to call themselves a team and

this fits most closely with Wageman et al's definition, this is the one that will be used for this research.

3.2.2 Group size paradox

However, the larger the group, the less they are associated with individual involvement in decisions (Levrau and Berghe, 2009: 31), a phenomenon that has been noted by many researchers (see for example: Wageman et al., 2008, Kakabadse, 1991). Furthermore, other researchers into group behaviour have gone further: *'smaller groups tended to have a higher membership participation rate than relatively larger size groups'* (Hsu, 1985: 192). It is not just decisions but participation in general that is affected by the size of the group. Some have called this a paradox that the larger the group the fewer members of it would actually participate in discussions (Esteban and Ray, 2001), (see also Bass and Norton, 1951, Gibb, 1951, Gallupe et al., 1992, and Davison, 2001).

While it seems that small groups are better for greater participation from all members the findings have not always been consistent (Hsu, 1985: 189). Esteban and Ray (2001) also showed that in some instances large groups were better than small ones (Esteban and Ray, 2001: 671). Other studies have shown that the larger the group, the more ideas were generated (Gallupe et al., 1992). Importantly it has been noted that *'efficiency rises as the group size rises "by facilitating input from all group members in a relatively simultaneous fashion" (Vogel et al., 1987)'* (Davison, 2001: 6).

These studies worked on groups up to about eighteen members, the level of facilitation necessary to ensure that groups or teams larger than this would remain

efficient would be high if it was possible at all. It should be noted that these experiments with the size of teams were carried out using students at academic institutions not real organisational or work teams. The character and work context of the teams would surely affect how the team would respond but the studies did not test for these aspects.

Additionally, how the team formed would affect how it performed. If the members do not trust each other and are not willing to work together, the outputs would be suboptimal at best. As Kakabadse noted a team is '*a stimulating, positive, enabling forum within which to maintain a dialogue*' otherwise it is a committee or a group (1991: 59). That is, a team only becomes a team when it has properly formed so that it can perform.

3.2.3 Formation of a Team

The formation of a team does not just happen automatically on bringing a selection of likely people together. For example: '*it is wrong to assume that an effective team will automatically form from individuals with appropriate task training.*' (Stewart and Hutchinson, 1998: 3) and:

'The Army does not build its teams on any academic model ... doctrine places the responsibility [for enhancing] ... the team's effectiveness, solely on the team commander through good leadership.' (Steptoe, 2005: 3).

so does the Royal Air Force.

For the formation and development of teams, Sheard et al produce a six-stage model shown in Figure 1.

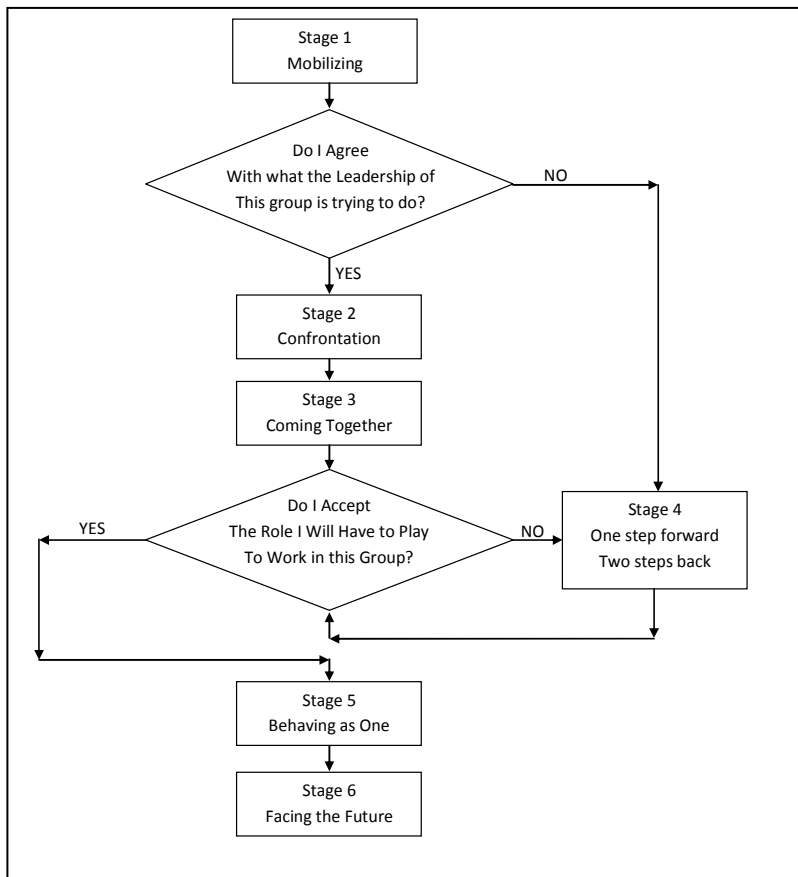


Figure 1 Six Stage Model of Team Formation (Sheard et al., 2009: 9)

The model is similar though more comprehensive than Tuckman's (1965, 2001) 'Forming, Norming, Storming, Performing' model and claims to identify '*all the stages of, and breakdown points within, a group's development*' (Sheard et al., 2009: 8). Critically, they go on to say that any group that is to function at its full potential is more creative than any individual within the group. This echoes Kakabadse's assertion that a team is '*a stimulating, positive, enabling forum within which to maintain a*

dialogue' (1991: 59). Sheard et al mark the coming together stage of team development as including the creativity and innovation that allows the discussion of a range of possible ideas (2009: 13).

However, Sheard et al also go on to note that decision making is a specific element of the mobilising stage of team development where they go from the discussion of many ideas to the implementation of one. Sheard et al (2009) are looking at **small** teams with numbers in single figures. Teams that themselves make decisions; teams that complete projects. Specifically, they use the case study of a 'turbine' manufacturer, though they say that the name and purpose of the company has been changed to maintain confidentiality, and a team within it delivering a specific project with concrete outputs and responsible to the company Board (Sheard and Kakabadse, 2002). At best, therefore, their model can only approximate to the likely development of a much larger entity if that entity is a team, such as that described by Wageman et al (2008) as informational or consultative teams, that are not delivering concrete outputs. Vital elements that make up the stages of development described by Sheard et al (2009) will be missing from larger, non-decision making teams delivering abstract or ambiguous outputs.

Returning then to Tuckman's (1965) simpler model which does not specifically require the team to make decisions. It does, though, relate to small groups. The original study was a review of 55 articles dealing with small group development (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977: 419) but again, Tuckman and Jensen do not define what small is. They also note that the original study was not representative across all small

groups as there was an overreliance on therapy and 'T-group' settings with too few laboratory or natural settings '*making generalizing difficult*' (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977: 420). Even so, they confirm the original hypothesis with a small addition of an adjourning stage on the end. Their review of the literature picks up that the 'death of the group' is an important phase for the members who have formed strong interpersonal feelings. This conclusion is once more taken from training and therapy groups (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977: 426) so generalising must, again, be difficult.

Wageman et al's (2008) research on senior leadership teams, derived from their work on a team diagnostic (Wageman et al., 2005) takes a different approach. They, defining teams by their purpose, specifically allow for large teams for information sharing and consultative purposes among others. However, the majority of the discussion of team development is about one example of a team from the four described; the decision-making team at the very top of an organisation. While acknowledging the existence of other types of team such as the informational and consultative ones, only the development and needs of the last and smallest team is really exposed by Wageman et al., that of the decision-making team right at the very top of the organisation for which they too suggest that a single figure size is about right and any more is too big. They do imply that the results apply to the larger types of team.

The need for a great leadership team purpose that includes consequentiality, challenge and clarity is clearly expressed (Wageman et al., 2008: 64). The difficulty of getting the purpose right is made very clear with an example showing one team's

continued conversations on the matter over two years as they struggled with this aspect (Wageman et al., 2008: 77-78). But the team in their example is a small, decision-making team at the top of an organisation. No example is given and no analysis made of the difficulties of developing the right purpose for a great informational or consultative team.

Nevertheless, it is instructive to look at the type of team issues raised by Wageman et al (2008) as they at least imply that the issues are applicable to other types of team than the small, top, decision-making team they actually discuss. There are three essentials to start making a team:

- deciding whether you need or want a team in the first place;
- creating a compelling purpose for it;
- getting the right composition in the members of the team (Wageman et al., 2008).

They assert that some leaders do not work well with teams and prefer, and are better at, working on their own, even in quite large organisations. Equally well, if a team is not necessary, it will be very difficult to create a compelling purpose for it.

If a leader decides that a team is a necessary way for him or her to work, then a compelling purpose for the team is necessary. The compelling purpose is itself split down into three elements of consequentiality, challenge, and clarity (Wageman et al., 2008: 64) of which clarity is by far the hardest to establish. It is hard to argue that these criteria may not apply to large teams that are not there to make decisions. A compelling purpose that is clear, challenging and of sufficient consequence will be

necessary to ensure that busy top executives will spend their time at meetings of a non-decision-making team, perhaps even more so as such people have spent their careers acquiring the power to make decisions and often feel that their time is only well spent when they are asked to make those decisions. The question remains as to whether senior people that have spent their working lives acquiring that power and making decisions will consider any meeting that does not make a decision sufficiently compelling.

The third essential, ensuring the right people are on the team and, as Wageman et al (2008) put it, the wrong ones are off the team (Wageman et al., 2008: 115), is also not so clear cut for large informational and consultative teams as for the small decision-making team. Again, their discussion centres on the small, decision-making team. A large informational team is there to ensure that information gets to and from all the right parts of the organisation. It has no other purpose. As such it must include all the people necessary to ensure that all parts of the organisation, or at least all parts relevant to the information being discussed, are represented. Choice of membership must be somewhat restricted as the team size gets larger as fewer people can be excluded without compromising the purpose of the team. That is, a person cannot be excluded if that person is the sole representative from a part of the organisation that needs to be included.

Wageman et al allow for selection of the small decision-making team to exclude some of whom it might be thought would naturally be on the team, yet still let them continue to work for the organisation. The flexibility to do this will reduce as the

purpose of the team demands the size gets larger. If there is only one suitably senior manager in charge of a part of the organisation that needs to be included in the informational team, but that person is also one that the leader would wish to exclude from the informational team because of the way they work in such a team, what should happen? Should they be fired and replaced with a person who can work in the team thus losing their other talents that the organisation wishes to retain, or should they be included in the team risking the smooth running of the team?

The problem of allowing those who might prevent new ways of working to remain in large teams would increase the problem of '*Allowing the same old habits to determine what occurs*' (Wageman et al., 2008: 115). It is possible that facilitation methods could be used to ameliorate this problem in larger teams, though this is not mentioned in the literature.

After the essentials for creating a senior leadership team, Wageman et al (2008) consider the enablers for a senior leadership team are:

- the structure it needs to work,
- support,
- and coaching (Wageman et al., 2008: 111 et seq).

Within the structure, the agenda was an important item; a stale agenda will provoke continuing habits. Equally, Wageman et al also note the difficulty of moving from the familiar, comfortable, relatively clear, tactical area to the difficult, ambiguous arena of the strategic. They, therefore, state that tactical issues must be taken at the end of the meetings to ensure that strategic ones are properly discussed.

What are appropriate subjects for senior leadership teams to discuss needs to be worked out in the team (Wageman et al., 2008: 128) as do team norms which should be organic and not imposed (Wageman et al.: 133). Neither of these things is in conflict with the size of the team per se, nor its overall purpose, for example to consult or to inform. However, getting agreement on these issues in a large group would inevitably be more difficult (see for example: Wageman et al., 2008, Sheard et al., 2009, Levrau and Berghe, 2009, Kakabadse, 1991).

3.2.4 Leadership of the Team

The final element to creating a '*great senior leadership team*' is the leadership of the team, that is the capability of the CEO (Wageman et al., 2008: 183 et seq). In this the leadership required is in two parts. First, setting up the team right, that is doing all the things that the leader has to do to comprise the issues already discussed such as ensuring the resources for the team, getting the right membership, providing the great purpose and so forth. Second, providing the coaching the team needs to move forward on its development path. The CEO needs to diagnose what is needed, both in setting up the team and in leading it at any particular moment, and execute the leadership to deal with the diagnosis (Wageman et al., 2008: 185-6). They need to be able to see through such things as the likelihood of the team putting on a charade of harmoniously working together (Wageman et al., 2008: 193) and dealing with a real or perceived lack of trust in each other (Wageman et al., 2008: 195) which can easily be reinforced by behaviour that emphasises to some that others are only interested in what they can get out of it for themselves not for the greater good of the organisation.

Again, there is nothing in these things that makes them specific to small, decision-making teams alone.

Interpersonal trust will be dealt with separately but politics and behaviour in the team will also affect its performance.

For example:

'Group members may insist ... that the group is the author of some particular accomplishment, but once the work is completed, the members of the group look for individual recognition in progression in their careers ... The only true group is the board of directors, with its corporate liability.' (Jaques, 1990: 235).

This tendency to claim individual recognition within a larger group might be termed poor hierarchical behaviour as individuals try to portray themselves in a better light to their superiors in order to gain promotion or other recognition over their peers. For others, such behaviour may be considered normal and to be expected in a hierarchy. For a team that is to generate openness, honesty and trust the tendency, whether considered normal or poor, must be guarded against.

The last sentence of the quote above implies that only groups or teams that are the very top of the organisation will be free from the tendency as the individuals have no further to go and they all have a cabinet responsibility. However, there is still the issue of succession to the roles of CEO and chairman within such a group; in a true hierarchy there is only one person at the top. Those that aspire to be considered for such positions will have still to play the politics of the boardroom. That is they will

have to influence those who will make the decisions on these matters. That means that the decision makers for the succession have to recognise the qualities of the person who wishes to be considered for the role. That person has to promote themselves in some form to get that recognition, just doing a good job is never enough.

This is recognised by even the mildest of leaders which is epitomised by the story of Leonard Cheshire, the commander of 76 Squadron and then 617, the Dambusters, Squadron in the Second World War. A modest and unassuming man, he, after winning one of his medals before he was promoted to command a squadron, was singled out in a night club on a night off and embarrassedly rose to his feet to acknowledge his accolade. When asked afterwards by one of his crew, who were with him that night, who had told the night club that he was there (with his new medal), said 'I did you fool!' (Morris, 2001). Self promotion is a necessary part of a leader's journey. How it is done is an indication of their character. If it causes dissention within the team then that team member becomes a problem. Something that Cheshire also realised when he took command of 617 Squadron as the existing members did not like his self-promotion in publishing his own book on being a bomber pilot. Cheshire had to work hard to gain their trust (Morris, 2001).

It is not only individual behaviour and politics that will affect large groups of ambitious people. Individuals in pursuit of their own goals will form cabals in a large group.

'As groups grow beyond three people, the personal attachments between individuals becomes looser and coalitions emerge in which some group members align themselves against other group members.' (Bratton et al., 2005: 265).

While Jaques' (1990) view expressed above that even in good teams individuals would try to use any success in their favour for promotion once the work was done, Bratton et al (2005) go further saying that individuals will gang up to further their purposes. Those of a like mind will get together so that their views are more likely to be accepted across the whole group. While the majority view is not always the right or correct view, it is also very difficult to continue to hold an opposing view as an individual or smaller group in the face of a majority (Janis, 1977). Like the group size paradox (Esteban and Ray, 2001) which shows that facilitation is necessary to ensure participation in a large group, so facilitation is also necessary to ensure that all views get a fair hearing as like-minded people within the group gang-up and individuals with contrary views or ideas are suppressed as they find it hard to maintain these views in the face of the majority. This also raises the question of team homogeneity and heterogeneity.

3.2.5 Similarity within the Team

The question of team heterogeneity or homogeneity is a contentious one.

'Problems often arise not because people differ but because they are too much alike. They share the same interests, possess similar talents and take the same approach. The result is that they fall over each other, have difficulty in

establishing personal identity and fail to gain the potential advantages of symbiosis. They feel uncomfortable but have no grounds for complaint.'

(Belbin, 2009: 65).

Other researchers take a different approach to the issues of homogeneity and heterogeneity. For them the type of work is important in the effect that homogeneity or heterogeneity has:

'With simple routine tasks [groups] could be as heterogeneous as you liked. Not so with complex tasks where interaction between group members is required.'

(Handy, 1993: 160).

For the complex, ambiguous and difficult tasks of discussing strategy and possible future paths it would seem that a homogeneous team would be preferable. However, Handy also says *'Heterogeneous groups tend to exhibit more conflict, but ... be more productive than homogeneous groups.'* (Handy, 1993: 159). For a practical task with a hard output, Handy's comments seem to fit – complexity requires homogeneity – but for an ambiguous discussion of complex subjects with soft and often not well defined outputs, ie the identification of several options not the choice of one, the greater production and number of views of a heterogeneous group would seem to be preferable though increased conflict would have to be managed.

This latter view is borne out in other literature:

'Several studies have particularly suggested that more heterogeneous teams, which consist of managers with varying backgrounds and competencies, are

better suited to manage in turbulent environments' (Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008: 223).

Naranjo-Gil et al were specifically looking at top management team heterogeneity as a predictor of whether an organisation could achieve strategic reorientation while avoiding disruption to ongoing operations.

Naranjo-Gil et al go on to say:

'heterogeneous TMTs [top management teams] will be better able to overcome resistance to change ... This is particularly valuable in large and complex organisations such as hospitals, where employees from various, often professionally defined, social categories cooperate.' (Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008: 224).

This emphasises the importance of heterogeneity when dealing with large organisations with diverse workforces comprising those of different professions and skills. There is no mention here, though, of either the scalability of the issue or the nature of the homogeneity. That is, how large an organisation should be and how diverse should its workforce be to gain advantage from homogeneity? How far, in increasing the size and diversity of the organisation, do the advantages go? Does the heterogeneity of the top management team need to increase commensurately? What sort of heterogeneity is being promoted? Is it general, that is, race, gender, religion? Or is it professional, with the diversity of the professions and skills in the large workforce being represented in the top management team?

Naranjo-Gil et al attribute the success of heterogeneous top teams thus:

'In general, social identity theory proposes that individuals categorise themselves and others into social groups, and that group identity becomes an important determinant of subsequent commitment and motivation. As more heterogeneous TMTs represent a wider set of social categories, more organizational participants are likely to identify with heterogeneous TMTs than with homogeneous TMTs and accept their strategies and action plans.'

(Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008: 224).

The answer to the second question posed above must be deduced to be that the heterogeneity required is that of the heterogeneity represented in the workforce, be that of either professional or general difference represented. Provided that the output required is the acceptance of plans by those in the organisation.

Naranjo-Gil et al go on to say:

'For TMTs facing strategic dynamism, their educational and functional background and organisational tenure may be more important than other factors such as age and gender. The former set of characteristics is likely to be a more important source of cognitive resources, which is the crucial benefit of heterogeneity in complex circumstances.' (Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008: 224)

This clearly favours what might be called organisational specific heterogeneity over more general issues of difference such as age, gender and ethnicity. However, the

arguments for heterogeneity as opposed to homogeneity are not conclusive as Naranjo-Gil et al themselves note that:

'homogenous teams may be more effective in strategy execution, where unanimous commitment to the decisions made is crucial for organizational performance.' (Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008: 224).

This is an interesting comment as strategic issues are often dynamic with many organisations reporting the ever increasing pace of change. Therefore heterogeneity is required to devise strategy but homogeneity to deliver it. A tall order when the idea of being able to separate the creation and delivery of strategy is considered by some to be the cause of institutions failing in carrying out their strategies (Martin, 2010).

Research on team heterogeneity has also shown inconsistent results. Some found hardly any support for the expected effects of top management team heterogeneity on strategic change (Wiersema and Bantel, 1992). Others that there was no relationship between heterogeneity and strategic moves (Tihanyi et al., 2000). And yet others that found that there was a negative relationship between them (Goodstein et al., 1994). Naranjo-Gil et al (2008: 230) look at other studies that support their work - (Keck, 1997, Carpenter, 2002, and Stewart, 2006). Naranjo-Gil et al (2008) emphasise that:

'it is useful to distinguish between job-related and non-job-related heterogeneity. One explanation for the lack of a cohesive body of findings in the upper echelon literature is that studies have failed to identify meaningful

dimensions of heterogeneity and to analyse the effects of these dimensions separately.' (2008: 231).

Patzelt et al (2008: 206) also note that the research in the area of top team heterogeneity is not conclusive, and that the:

'variety of demographic TMT variables researchers have analysed is huge and covers, among many others, education, functional background, tenure, heterogeneity and age. (Patzelt et al., 2008: 209).

Although not closely defined, heterogeneity here is clearly being confined to some but not all differences. They go on to note that the analysis on all the characteristics is beyond their, and probably every, study (Patzelt et al., 2008: 209). They take formal management education, whether the founder is a member of the team and the experience of the industry as their criteria. In this they seem to be following the job-related diversity issue raised by Naranjo-Gil et al (2008). However, Patzelt et al's results are not conclusive either. Researching in the small biotech venture companies they found that formal management education had more effect in those companies developing therapeutics than those developing platform technologies. On the other hand, founder-based firm-specific experience was negative for those developing therapeutics and positive for platform technologies. Lastly, it depended on which part of the industry executives had experience (biotechnology or pharmaceutical) whether the positive effect of their experience was better for platform technologies or therapeutics. In other words, in these job-related criteria, it all depends.

However, apart from the presence of the founder, the results were all positive; it was only the degree that varied. Patzelt et al do note however, that:

'other variables have been shown to impact organizational outcomes and may effect on bioventure performance contingent on the venture's business model.'
(2008: 218).

In the realms of theoretical proof, this would require some sort of sensitivity analysis to find the strength of the impact of the heterogeneity variable on organisational outcome. In the real world of social interaction at this level this would be impossible to achieve as, even if all the relevant variables were known, it would not be possible to control them.

The question also remains as to how generalisable the results from small biotech companies would be to larger organisations in different spheres where a multitude of context and circumstance are different. What would equate to 'founder-based firm-specific experience' in a large, long established organisation? What is it that is relevant in the relationship between biotechnology and pharmaceutical experience to running platform technology or therapeutic firms to military leadership? To argue from the particular to the general is a dubious logical move which requires very careful justification. At best this only indicates that looking into job-related heterogeneity in a specific industry may bear fruit.

To some extent, the multiplicity of heterogeneous variables that could impact organisations in a positive or negative way echoes the problems of the trait theory of leadership in that no two lists of required traits is the same (Bolden, 2004: 9, Bolden

and Gosling, 2006) and a compilation of all the lists would make one so large as not only to be impractical to try to learn, but also patently impossible for any human being to epitomise all the characteristics required. All the possible job-related diversity probably could not be represented on a functioning team, yet it is clear that sufficient diversity is helpful in creating the heterogeneity that assists the top team in an organisation to take that organisation forward. Deciding what is necessary and sufficient is the crucial question. Here, others have noted that diversity is contextual to the team and the organisation (Levräu and Berghe, 2009).

If team heterogeneity and homogeneity is important to the way that a team operates and social identity theory points the way to how some heterogeneous issues affect team performance, then the culture of organisations and changing culture is also going to be an important issue in forming a team and getting that team to perform, particularly with a large and in some senses diverse team.

3.2.6 Summary of Teams

To summarise the literature on teams, first there is the dispute on the size of teams. Most research considers a team to be a small decision making entity (eg Kakabadse, 1991, Levräu and Berghe, 2009, Sheard et al., 2009) while some include larger groups as teams (Handy, 1993, Wageman et al., 2008). The Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team is a large informational or consultative type team. As that part of the literature that considers teams to be small decision-making entities, also consider that decision making is an inalienable part of being a team, their models for

team development are flawed when considered against a team that is not constituted to make decisions.

In considering a large informational type team, the literature leads to the following criteria for the formation of high-performing such teams:

- the need for a team;
- a clear purpose;
- the right composition;
- the right structure, support and coaching;
- and leadership (Wageman et al., 2008).

While Wageman et al demand exclusion of those who may not work well with the culture and purpose of the new team, this thesis argues that for large cross organisational teams inclusion, and not exclusion, is necessary and the issues thus raised about behaviour in the team have to be dealt with, perhaps by facilitation.

The larger size of a team also brings with it other problems, in particular the group size paradox (Esteban and Ray, 2001). Here, the problem is that the larger the group, the fewer people participate in the discussions. As the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team is larger, at 32-34 members, than those experimented with in the literature (Hsu, 1985, Gallupe et al., 1992, Vogel et al., 1987, Davison, 2001, Esteban and Ray, 2001, Bass and Norton, 1951, Gibb, 1951, Barker, 1965), where the largest team had 18 members, the expectation would be that this phenomenon will be more

pronounced. The effectiveness of the facilitation methods used to achieve participation by all members will need to be examined in the research.

The charade of cooperation (Wageman et al., 2008) rather than genuine better working practices within a team can be a problem to the performance of that team. The research will need to examine individual Team member's tendencies to behave in the Team to better their position at the expense of other members or to form sub groups for similar purposes (Jaques, 1990, Bratton et al., 2005).

Lastly in this section, the issues of team homogeneity and heterogeneity were examined. The effect on discussions in the difficult, ambiguous, strategic sphere on the cohesiveness of a team, which is supposed to be enhanced by homogeneity and the creativity of a team which is supposed to be enhanced with heterogeneity were somewhat ambiguous in the literature. The definition of what type of heterogeneity, work-related or general, must be specified and whether it relates internally to the organisation or more generally. It seems that work-related heterogeneity as seen internally to the organisation is useful in creativity and generating ideas in the ambiguous space of strategy, while any homogeneity that can be emphasised helps in cohesion and team building.

3.3 The Use of Power

How power is wielded in an organisation not only seems to be part of the definition of the culture in an organisation but also vital to the behaviours, in particular

to the way 'politics' is played, in the organisation. It is also central to the issue of trust. There are several taxonomies of power: Bratton et al use Reward Power, Coercive Power, Legitimate Power, Expert Power, and Referent Power (2005: 125-8) following (French and Raven, 1959b) while Handy uses Physical, Resource, Position, Expert, and Personal Power (Handy, 1993: 125 et seq). Mintzberg, however, gives five bases for power: resource, technical skill, body of knowledge, formal power (which stems from legal prerogatives), and access to those who can rely on the other four. He also notes that *'Having power is not enough – you need the will and energy to use it. And the political skill to use it effectively'* (Mintzberg, 1983: 354). Although he uses the phrase 'having power', he categorises the attribute of power in the bases for power. One has to speculate whether he really meant 'having the base for power was not enough'. The object of possession not being power itself. French and Raven seem to follow this line of thought when they say: *For all five types [of power] the stronger the basis of power the greater the power'* (French and Raven, 1959b: 326).

For Handy the word 'power' is the noun describing the concept not the verb describing its use. For him, the exercise of power is described by the verb 'to influence'. Handy describes his typology as the 'sources of power', akin to Mintzberg's bases of power, and talks about exercising them. Handy notes that *'If A's source of power has no importance for B then that source of power is ineffective in that situation'* (Handy, 1993: 125). That is, the follower has a vote and can decide on his or her response. But Handy still talks about the possession of a power source and exercising power, noting that 'negative power' – the power to disrupt – and competing sources of power will be put into the balance to decide the outcome, for example *'Money has*

been known to overrule expertise' (Handy, 1993: 125). Douglas seems to agree with this interpretation:

'So long as the border refuses to take power and so long as there is a center to blame, by apportioning blame to power the border maintains the distribution of power that justifies its philosophy' (Wildavsky and Douglas, 1983: 190).

If power could not be possessed, how could the 'border' refuse to take it? However, the idea that the 'border' (subordinate to the 'centre') is active, or at least has a vote, in the exercise of power is embedded here.

Kanter notes *'to expand power, share it'* (Kanter, 1979: 350) which would imply that power was a possession, else how could it be shared? She also notes that a feeling of powerlessness engenders a need to control which is counter-productive.

'Reasons why organisation do not adopt empowering strategies:

- *giving up control is threatening to people who have fought for every shred of it*
 - *people do not want to share power with those they look down on*
 - *managers fear losing their own place and special privileges in the system*
 - *'Predictability' often rates higher than 'flexibility' as an organisational value'*
- (Kanter, 1979: 352).

Power here seems to be treated as a possession; if you feel *powerless* then you do not *have* power.

3.3.1 Counterproductive use of Power

Bratton et al take the concept of power not being a simple possession further than Handy:

'Power is better considered as a consequential rather than a causal phenomenon. If leaders persuade their followers to act, then the leaders become powerful; it is not the leader's power that causes subordinate action' (Bratton et al., 2005: 137).

This would seem to allow the interpretation that by persuading followers to act, leaders had given them some power. That is, by giving away power, leaders had increased their own ability to get many things done. If power is a measure of how much a person can achieve then leaders have increased power by giving it away.

However, Bratton et al go on to say *'followers can choose not to obey – they may have to face consequences but it is still a choice'* (Bratton et al., 2005: 120). Here there seems little doubt that power is not a possession that can be divided up and given away like money. Followers must clearly be persuaded to choose the path that the leader wants them to. The possession of power is not enough to make the followers take a certain course of action. That is, followers would rather not take the action than get the reward, they are happy to accept the punishment rather than take the action (coercive power), they feel that the leader has stepped outside the rationality and or legitimacy of her position, they no longer believe in the expertise of

the leader (at least in this regard), or the leader has fallen out of favour (referent power).

Grint puts it thus:

'the power of superordinates over subordinates is something to be achieved in and through the relationship between the bodies, not something which inheres within the superordinate; ... leaders do not 'have' power, because power is not a possession, it is a relationship' (Grint, 1995: 223).

'the critical conclusion from authority systems in the trenches [of World War 1], is that subordinates' execution of superordinate requirements is likely to be premised upon some degree of compliance. ... [but] it is by no means a foregone conclusion that soldiers will continue to obey' (Grint, 1995: 224).

To some extent this is borne out in present day military leadership theory in that the Defence Leadership and Management Centre's Handbook states that *'commanders are not leaders until their position has been ratified in the hearts and minds of those they command'* (Leadership in DefenceWatters, 2004: 6). Grint (1995) is clear that power is a relationship while the Defence Leadership and Management Centre imply that while a certain amount of coercion may be used prior to a suitable relationship being established, it is not going to be easy to get much done until that relationship has been established. Being appointed to the formal position of command is not enough to lead people.

This is also reflected in the issue that over reliance on power or coercion to get things done is likely to lead to dissention. Something that is probably reflected in the example of disobedience from the First World War quoted above but has been known for a long time, for example: *'hee being in chief command, must use his authority sparingly, if he intends to keep it long'* (Ward, 1639: Sect 15, p17). This quote from nearly 400 years ago acknowledges that the military have always known that power is not a perfect tool for getting others to do the commander's will. It is part of the relationship between a commander and his or her people, but they may choose to obey or not.

Yet other authors still talk of giving away power. Rowland and Higgs give an example of a company that involved many of its more junior people in the development of the company's ways of working (Rowland and Higgs, 2008: 160 et seq). The result of which was one of them saying *'thank you for letting me lead'* (Rowland and Higgs, 2008: 165). Rowland and Higgs note of the company top leaders that *'By giving away power they had become more powerful'* (Rowland and Higgs, 2008: 165). For Rowland and Higgs, power is clearly something that can be given away (Higgs and Rowland, 2005). At another point they note in another example that *'By authorising others to lead the leadership team now had far more command than when they had tried to control'* (Rowland and Higgs, 2008: 211). There is a sense of giving away power here as well, though the language is now of 'leading', 'command' and 'control'. By this, you could deduce that what Rowland and Higgs mean by giving away power is giving others permission to lead – expanding on the quote of one of the junior leaders in the earlier example. That is, giving away a portion of the position power,

the responsibility to do certain things, which had, hitherto, been arrogated only to the top leaders. The sense of command here is that the leaders could get more done this way than when they had tried to control things minutely.

Other authors use language that has power as an object that is possessed by someone:

'a given social actor ... has more power with respect to some social actors and less power with respect to others. Thus power is context or relationship specific' (Pfeffer, 1981: 304-5). And again, *'organisational politics involves those activities taken within organisations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes'* (Pfeffer, 1981: 307).

Although Pfeffer denotes that a social actor possesses power, he also notes that it is dependent on the relationship between two people. He goes on to say that *'The distribution of power within a social setting can also become legitimate over time ... When power is so legitimated it is denoted as authority'* (Pfeffer, 1981: 305). There is a clear parallel here to the notion that a commander is not a leader until ratified as such in the minds of his followers, (Watters, 2004). The understanding being that only the followers could make that 'ownership' of power legitimate.

Handy (1993) encapsulates the ratification of a commander as a leader as being a problem if the inappropriate source of power is used within a particular organisational culture. For example position power in a Task culture. Handy also notes that the overuse of certain forms of power in some cultures will change them into others – top management consistently using more rules and regulations in a Task

culture because of lack of resources will move that culture towards a Role orientation with consequent huge loss of morale along the way. In this case, commanders will not be ratified in the hearts and minds of those they command because they cause this loss of morale.

Perhaps more importantly here Harrison notes that *'Often, however, internal conflict and external stress drive these [task orientated] organizations toward power and role orientations'* (Harrison, 1972: 122). So not only does the inappropriate use of power drive task oriented organisations to a different orientation but so do normal circumstances; assuming, of course, that most organisations have some internal conflict and external stress in the tumble of life. Thus, if power is not a possession but a relationship, and subordinates allow superiors to exercise power, then it must follow that the subordinates themselves want to work in a role orientated organisation (following Handy and Harrison) despite their often vociferous protestations to the contrary. (Of course they may have no idea of the consequences of their actions and, like most people, just blame others for what happens.)

Taking any typology of 'cultural' orientation, followers allowing their superiors to exercise power in a way that changes the cultural orientation must bear some responsibility for the outcome of that exercise of power in some large measure, even if that measure is not equal between leaders and followers. The followers have decided to allow that exercise of power. Coercion and fear can only ever be, at best, a partial excuse (Grint, 1995). Of course, taking this further, bad leadership leading to an

inappropriate culture is also the responsibility of the follower not just the leader (for example see 'Chainsaw Al' in Kellerman, 2004: Chap 7, Kellerman, 2008).

3.3.2 Making Power Productive

Leaders sometimes have 'power' that their subordinates do not, for example that of hiring the people who work in the company. *'A task orientated, traditional company hires people and expects them to follow rules.'* (Hammer and Champy, 1993: 10). One assumes that they would choose those who were predisposed to following the rules. However, Hammer and Champy go on:

'Companies that have reengineered don't want employees who can follow rules: they want people who will make their own rules ... within the boundaries or their obligation to the organization – agreed upon deadlines, productivity goals, quality standards and so forth – they decide how and when work will get done.' (Hammer and Champy, 1993: 97)

This seems very much in line with the Rowland and Higgs notion of a portion of the overall responsibility of a senior leader being devolved to a more junior person; of not trying to control every little thing but allowing others to take control over a portion of the whole within a framework that allows the efforts of others to be coordinated with their own. This is no more than the precise description of Mission Command. Grint's comments on Hammer and Champy's quote above are:

'Reengineering's version of empowerment seems to embody several related aspects. First, rule-bound behaviour can be very dysfunctional. ... The second aspect is that, accepting that 'working to rule' usually means little gets done precisely because people have always to interpret which rule needs applying in each circumstance, teams should decide for themselves the best way to organise and execute the work process. ... Third, the idea of devolving responsibility, within agreed limits, to process teams ... Fourth, and perhaps most fundamentally of all, the idea of inverting the power relationship between superordinate and subordinate is itself dependent upon a particular conception of existing power relationships. ... [the assumption] is that power flows downwards from superordinate to subordinate, so that the causal explanation of action suggests that subordinates act because superordinates are powerful. But we might profitably regard power as the consequence and not the cause of subordinates action' (Grint, 1995: 97-8).

All of these things ring true but we might profitably look at the language and see that both Hammer and Champy, and Grint are talking about the same thing. Hammer and Champy claim that reengineered companies are more productive. They must be doing more with less. If a leader is more powerful because they get more done, then the leader is more powerful in a reengineered company (providing more does actually get done in such an organisation). However, the reason that the reengineered company gets more done is manifestly because of subordinate action – the whole point of reengineering – thus the increased power of the leader, the superordinate, is a consequence of the subordinate's action. But the subordinate

could not have got more done in a 'rule bound', non-reengineered organisation because of the first three points that Grint makes: the dysfunctionality of rule bound behaviour, the loss of productivity as workers try to interpret the rules, and the lack of devolved responsibility to work teams.

Thus the leaders that set out to 'reengineer' their company or lead an organisation that is not rule-bound have a part to play. The distribution of power, perhaps power itself, is very much a relationship between at least two players. As the philosophy of Mission Command has it: the commander or leader must not constrain the follower by being too directive, s/he must say what is to be done not how it is to be done, and the follower must take responsibility to try to achieve the object that is desired. Without a strong, trusting relationship between the two people there is no chance that the distribution of power or its enhancement will occur.

When those such as Kanter (1979) and Rowland and Higgs (2005) talk about giving away power it is a linguistic shorthand for the sorting out of the necessary relationship between a leader and a follower to trust one another to the extent that the productivity of both rises. It makes sense to say that

'Followers are deeply enmeshed in their own subordination. They are not isolated selves, powerless against leaders, but instead powerfully engaged in a complex network of self-leadership' (Bratton et al., 2005: 137)

and when leaders and followers work this out together, they are both at their most powerful.

Perhaps it is understandable that James Murch should say

‘On the whole, however, power is a disappointing concept. It gives us surprisingly little purchase in reasonable models of complex systems of social choice’ (Murch, 1966: 342).

The essentially contested nature of ‘power’ makes it very difficult to discern what is meant by different authors. However, going back to Wittgenstein and the concept that the meaning of a sentence is contained in its use (Wittgenstein, 1972), we can allow for the different uses without continually arguing that one is wrong and another right. Each allows for an interpretation of a complex world that can add to our understanding of what is happening.

3.3.3 Summary on power

In summary, within any team or group, the exercise of power will need to be done with care and forethought with regard to the likely effects and outcomes. Ward’s (1639) animadversions on a General using power too frequently and so losing the will of his people are well made. The over exercise of power within the Senior Leadership Team will likely lose the will of members of the Team to participate in a meaningful way and turn them into supine disciples in the same way as that described by Dowding (1941).

The observation that the imposition of too many rules and hierarchical working will change a task oriented, innovative culture to a role based one where innovation is likely to be stifled (Handy, 1993) is also pertinent. Those higher up the hierarchy in the

Senior Leadership Team will need not to impose rule based hierarchical working if the Team is to be innovative. Equally well, power oriented people will see task oriented people as weak while task oriented people will see their power oriented counterparts as despotic and fearful of innovation (Harrison, 1972). Again, careful facilitation will be necessary to ensure that the Team does not fracture along these lines.

When considering trust within the group, any exercise of power that increases predictability will assist the creation of trust (Lieberkind and Oliver, 1998) but, counter to this, an emphasis on power differential will make trust harder to develop (Hurley, 2006). Thus any facilitation will have to carefully consider the outcomes of the meeting of the team and manage the aspects of power accordingly. Especially as some power is likely to have been exercised by the leader of the group to get the meeting to happen in the first place as people who have spent their lives accumulating power do not like giving up their time unless they themselves consider the time to be well used (Wageman et al., 2008).

3.4 Changing Culture

The question that this research is addressing is the establishment of an egalitarian team in a hierarchy; the question implies that a non-hierarchical culture is embedded within a hierarchical culture. Also, since senior Royal Air Force officers will have been inculcated in the hierarchical culture of the Service and lived as part of that culture through their career, their culture will have to change to be part of the non-hierarchical team. Furthermore, part of the purpose of the Senior Leadership Team

was to change behaviours (a manifestation of culture (Schein, 1996, Alvesson, 2013)) of the Team members. So how to change the culture of a team is a necessary part of the literature review as it was a necessary part of the action research.

3.4.1 What Culture is of Interest in Teams?

There is a long tradition in the literature of anthropology and management theorists in writing about culture. Douglas (2002b) notes that there is a transition in cultures and that homogeneity is only achieved with difficulty and is short lived; for her, culture is something that is constantly *changing*. Alvesson (2013) also notes the lack of homogeneity in the culture of complex groups. For many of the management theorists culture is something that is very hard to *change*; for example Schein looks at behaviours as one of the observable manifestations of culture which is rooted in deeper beliefs and values (Schein, 1996). Others agree with this definition

‘the most salient aspect of any culture typically involves behaviour ... however, they are also just the tip of the iceberg. The ‘mass’ of culture is not so readily visible, ... Hidden from view are the beliefs, values, and myths that provide context to manifest behaviours’ (Kohl, 1984: 157).

Hofstede et al believe that culture is a passing management craze: *‘Culture’ has become a fad, among managers, among consultants, and among academics, with somewhat different concerns.*’ (1990: 286), they also see culture as something deep within people *‘The core of culture ... is formed by values ... that cannot be observed as*

such but are manifested in alternatives of behaviour.' (Hofstede et al., 1990: 291). As such, many of these writers find cultural change hard, up to impossible, to achieve.

'the most central issue for leaders, therefore, is how to get at the deeper levels of a culture ... and how to deal with the anxiety that is unleashed when those levels are challenged.' (Schein, 2004: 37). *'it cannot be discovered or mechanically manipulated; it can only be described and interpreted'* (Meek, 1998: 464).

This is not necessarily contrary to Douglas' (2002) view that culture is constantly changing as she is observing what is occurring whereas the management theorists are looking at what they can achieve in creating relatively quick change for specific purposes. This does not preclude the organisations they refer to changing naturally as they adapt to circumstances and personalities. It is important here to note that some cultural theorists in amongst the management theorists do think that culture is easier to change than the others.

For example, Hofstede et al describe an airline company that turned itself from one believing in the technical superiority of its offer, with great discipline in its delivery, to a customer focus. As they put it, *'the company switched from a product-and-technology to a market-and-service orientation.'* (1990: 293). The culture in the airline was changed from one where the important personnel were those who were in contact with the customers not those senior managers and the pilots who had previously been important. Former strict hierarchical discipline was turned into employee empowerment.

'Superiors became advisors; those on the firing line received a lot of discretion in dealing with customer problems on the spot, while only checking with superiors after the fact – which involves an acceptance of employees' judgement, with all the risks that entails.' (Hofstede et al., 1990: 294).

The observed behaviours of the employees of the company, including those of higher management, had changed from one way of operating to another, perhaps not quite a mutually exclusive one but certainly a very different one. Clearly what was *valued* in the way the company operated vis-a-vis its customers had changed, but what of the *values* of the company personnel?

It is conceivable that those that worked for the company changed the way they acted because they saw that it was necessary for the company to survive in a very competitive world but that the values they held dear had not changed. In the long run this would, one would think, cause backsliding in the behaviours observed and even, for those who felt most strongly about it, departure from the company to work for an organisation whose values were better aligned to those of that person.

However, the interviews that collected the data for the case study were conducted three years after the turnaround and indicated that most of the employees *'show considerable acceptance of their new role'* (Hofstede et al., 1990: 294) though Hofstede et al do acknowledge that some managers did, when talking about the history of their company, go back to the years before the turnaround. The overall impression given is that culture, and personal values within the company had changed. It was not just the process that the company valued in doing its business that had

changed. Even so, it must be said that some employees obviously still hankered after the status-quo ante, while understanding the need for the change in processes.

In the light of this example, it is interesting to note that Hooper and Potter see the nature of organisations' culture impinging on the empowered leadership within an organisation or even positively preventing empowerment:

'It is the culture of the organization which determines the extent to which leadership is enabled or inhibited on a day-to-day basis. In 'flat' organisations where empowerment is part of the ethos, a significant amount of leadership tends to be found at all levels. In contrast, in hierarchical and bureaucratic settings, leadership tends to be stifled with few individuals taking personal ownership of problem situations.' (Hooper and Potter, 2000: 158).

In Hofstede et al's airline, the type of leadership has changed from what was a hierarchical organisation where few took responsibility for action to one where empowerment was happening and leadership was being found at all levels. It is important to note that moving from a 'product-and-technology orientation to a service-and-customer' one does not imply that the organisation has moved from a bureaucratic and hierarchical to a flat structure. Hofstede et al only state that the company had empowered its employees that formally were not empowered.

Nevertheless, it is still the case that authors on the subject of culture are very divided as to what the nature of culture is. Handy (1993), following Harrison (1972) divides organisations into those having one of four types of culture: Power, Role, Task and People, while Mintzberg divines seven different types: Entrepreneurial, Machine,

Professional, Innovative, Missionary, Diversified, Political (Mintzberg, 1989) of which Handy equates the first five to his own four (Handy, 1993). Deal and Kennedy propose a typology of Tough-guy, Macho; Work-hard, Play-hard; Bet-your-company; and Process (Brown, 1998: 70). Quinn & McGrath propose yet another typology of Market – Rational; Advocacy – Ideological; Chain – Consensual; Hierarchy – Hierarchical (Brown, 1998: 71) and Sholz yet another with three dimensions of Evolution, Internal and External with the dimensions of Evolution having five types within it: Stable, Reactive, Anticipatory, Exploring and Creative; and Internal having three types within it: Productive, Bureaucratic, Professional. (Brown, 1998: 71-2). Brown actually tabulates a classification of organisational culture thus:

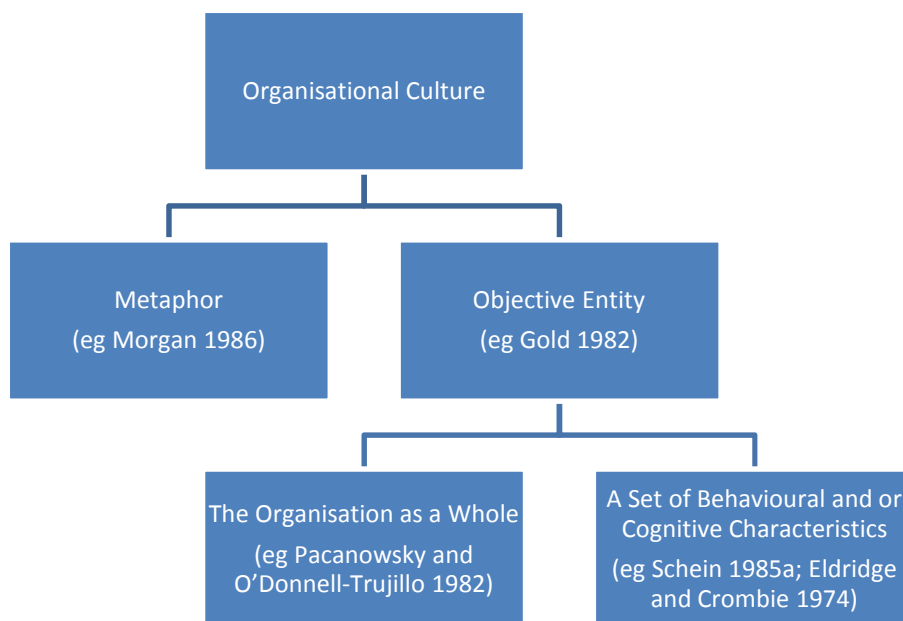


Figure 2 Classification of Culture (Brown, 1998: 9)

This diagram clearly shows that different authors have different views as to what culture is and how it may be observed and measured. It is, therefore, inevitable

that there will be different views as to how to change it and how a leader should go about doing so (or not, for those who believe that a leader would be wasting his or her time to try).

A further view comes from Thompson who talks about five types of social group: Fatalists, Hierarchy, Autonomy, Individuality and Egalitarianism (Thompson, 2008) which has some similarity to organisational culture as described above, particularly Quinn and McGrath. Thompson (2008) certainly proposes this as the way all groups work, claiming both necessity and sufficiency, which would imply that organisations set up for specific outputs, such as commercial companies, government organisations, the military etc would also work in this way. The origins of this Cultural Theory are in Douglas (1970) originally called Grid and Group which she ascribes to a Durkheim thesis. She proposes a two axis graph with the horizontal axis being Group *'meaning a general boundary around a community'* and the vertical axis being Grid *'regulation'* (Douglas, 2007: 2). This produces the two-by-two diagram below:

Isolate	Positional
Individualist	Enclave

Table 1 Cultural Orientations (Douglas, 2007: 2)

To this she notes that '*Max Weber's three types of rationality: bureaucracy, market and religious charisma [map to] three of the grid-group cultures, positional, individualist and sectarian enclave.*' (Douglas, 2007: 2). Thompson (2008) adds to this the position of the hermit – autonomy – which he sits in the diagram as a box over the middle separate from the rest. In his discussion of social change, Thompson mostly ignores the hermits as, even though individuals may go there for a time, just because they are shut off from the rest they have little influence on affairs.

Thompson (2008) describes the way the world is constantly changing and groups morph between the categories creating many different ways of change. He talks about this movement as a natural phenomenon and, therefore, is akin to the Douglas (2002) view of change occurring rather than being driven by leaders.

Handy's (1993) typology is established round the way an organisation structures and organises itself to carry out the work it is created to do, the business of the company. Or put another way, '*organisational structure, ... is closely related to organisational culture.*' (Meeker, 2008: 97). Hooper and Potter go further, defining culture as '*a reflection of the way work and other issues are handled in the organisation, exemplified by the types of behaviour which are encouraged and rewarded*' (2000: 197). With this definition, Hooper and Potter are definitely ones that believe that 'culture' can be changed and that leaders have an active and positive part to play in that.

The way power is exercised in an organisation is also an important part of the culture with Handy allotting different types of power as the best to be used in each of

his types of organisation (Handy, 1993). He goes on to detail the consequences of using certain types of power in different types of organisation. The issue of power has been discussed above but it is worth noting here that the way power is used is fundamental to the way an organisation operates.

Deal & Kennedy's (Brown, 1998) typology of organisational culture uses the way the people in organisations behave to differentiate the types. If the preference is for macho behaviour or big risk taking (Bet-your-Company) and so forth, then that is the culture of the organisation. Quinn and McGrath, and Scholz's (Brown, 1998) way of thinking about culture follows similar lines, effectively defining the culture by the preferred behaviour. Thus, as they ascribe the behaviour patterns followed to those that the 'Boss' is seen to want, they see culture change as relatively easy. Higgs (2004) puts it this way – 80% of corporate culture is attributable to leadership behaviours and 60% of organisational performance is attributable to corporate culture, so leadership is important for business success. The assumption being that if the culture is right, the profits roll in. As Meek puts it: *'It is implied that an ineffective organisation can be made effective ... if an unhealthy organizational culture can be supplanted with a healthy one'* (Meek, 1998: 454). Though Higgs does note that *'leader **centric** behaviours were negatively related to success (in creating change)'* (Higgs, 2007: 54, my emphasis).

The clearly defined cultural types used by those describing culture in organisations are not so clear cut in reality. Handy admits that organisations are not cleanly organised along just one of his 'cultures'. Others go further. Meek says that

'Some theorists use the term 'culture' to embrace all that is human within the organisation.' (Meek, 1998: 453) and that:

'Organisations are often arenas for dispute and conflict, and one of the main items under dispute is often values. Organisations are not one homogeneous culture, but are 'multi-cultural'.' (Meek, 1998: 461).

This observation reflects back to the heterogeneous issues already discussed in the section on teams. It also aligns with (Douglas, 2007) and (Alvesson, 2013) comments. However, whilst describing observable behaviours to be the manifestation of underlying values, if the workers are to produce effectively in line with the intent of the management, surely it is vital to achieve a homogeneous company culture so that the company personnel should agree on its values.

One could easily see that tension might arise within Hofstede et al's airline company example above over the real worth of the 'new' values, particularly should difficult times come around for them again. At such a difficult time when the future of the company was challenged, those company personnel that Hofstede et al (1990) noted as referring back to the time before the change for the history of their company might begin to wonder if the old values were not better after all.

However, Meek asserts that *'leaders do not create culture, it emerges from the collective social interaction of groups and communities'* (Meek, 1998: 459). If, therefore, the empowered, service-and-customer 'culture' had emerged from the collective social interaction of Hofstede et al's (1990) airline personnel, one would not expect it to waver quickly in the face of adversity. But this would be at odds with the

assertion that the 'culture' of the airline was changed in some forced way by the management. The inescapable conclusion is that the word culture is being used in two different ways here.

Apart from the clear distinction of those who believe that culture can be changed at will (if not easily) and those, such as Meek (1998), who do not; it is clear that distinctions of culture in real organisations are not clear-cut and as simple as the academic definitions would have one believe. They are not clear-cut even if the discriminator of culture is taken as being the way a company organises itself to do business. Parts of the organisation may have different ways of behaving depending on what their specific outputs are. For example, a role organisation may have within it a task organisation: perhaps the marketing, or the research and development department (Handy, 1993). Thus changing the culture of an organisation may not be as simple as a leader just deciding that now s/he is in charge they are all going to operate in a particular way. Integrating, perhaps even protecting, different cultures within organisations and understanding which are appropriate for which outputs or sub-organisations could add complexity upon complexity. Furthermore, it is likely that behaviours that are acceptable or expected in one cultural type actually cause problems in another.

'The task-oriented people regarded the foregoing behaviour [that of authoritarian or hierarchical people] as uncooperative and, sometimes, as devious and dishonest. The power-oriented people, however, interpreted the task-oriented individuals' emphasis on communication and cooperation as

evidence of softness and fear of taking responsibility. Each group was engaging in what it regarded as normal and appropriate practice and tended to regard the other as difficult to work with or just plain wrong' (Harrison, 1972: 130).

This tends to lead to calls for a homogeneous way of working, or culture, which has the potential to destroy the good output of the part of the organisation that needs to have the type of culture that is being ousted. For example stopping innovation in the research and development department as hierarchical culture is imposed for the sake of homogeneity to provide harmony in the organisation.

3.4.2 Culture as Organisational Identity

Handy (1993) starts his section on culture with a description around how the English delight in a different culture as they drive south through France in the summer. Grint (1995: 164) starts his section on the way the word is used as in 'agriculture' and 'horticulture' and concludes that the word is used to define groups of humans (Grint, 1995: 166). For him it is a heterogeneous practice – as there are many ways of doing horticulture – but a homogeneous thing used to define a group – if you are with us you are like us (or more often than not, you are not like us so you are not with us).

'Mary Pattibone Bole is alleged to have said that, 'Culture is what your butcher would have if he were a surgeon'. ... the form of division between the 'lowly' butcher and the 'superior' surgeon ... 'Perfect' surgery may be configured as slicing up flesh in a way apparently little different from 'perfect' butchery. But the former will generally remain regarded as a higher form of skill and the

latter, 'butchery', is often associated with indiscriminate killing, not perfection of a craft skill' (Grint, 1995: 166).

The language of Mary Pattibone Bole is clearly pejorative and is being used to create a difference so that a person would aspire to be in the in-group and explicitly to exclude a certain 'class' of person. One would have thought that there *is* a little difference in skill between surgery and butchery in that the surgeon has to slice up flesh on a live patient so that it can be put back together and the patient live (a presumably better life). Even the perfect butcher is not asked to reconstruct the animal and breathe life back into it. The issue is more about the perceived class structure in Britain at the time than the real relative skill of two professionals. The point that Grint makes is well made though – *'culture is a boundary device to mark off insiders from outsiders.'* (Grint, 1995: 167).

Cornelisson et al put it slightly differently using Social Identity theory:

*'Social identity tends to be seen as an **internalized knowledge structure**, organizational identity tends to be seen as a **system of shared meaning**, while corporate identity tends to be seen as a **projected image**' (2007: S3).*

Grint agrees that culture is *'a system of 'shared meanings', a pattern of internalised norms and attitudes; 'a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions and symbols that define the way a firm conducts its business'* (Grint, 1995: 174). Thus culture here is a sense making tool allowing those within an organisation to order the kaleidoscope of events, people and things around them. It is the fixed point in the ever moving mass. Put another way: *'organizational culture is significant as a way of understanding*

organisational life' (Alvesson, 2013: 2). Culture is not, therefore, a thing, as meanings are not things (Alvesson, 2013: 201)

Taken this way, leaders can of course manipulate 'culture' as they tell stories so that their people can make sense of what it is that they do. Hofstede claims that both history and culture are not grown naturally but are carefully constructed and reconstructed to suit an organisation (Hofstede, 1993). As an example, Grint says:

'Cadbury invented its past to fit its future. Or, as Jeanette Winterson put it, considerably more eloquently: 'Everyone remembers things that never happened. And it is common knowledge that people often forget things which did. Either we are all fantasists and liars or the past has nothing definite in it' (Winterson 1990: 92)' (Grint, 1995: 180).

Clearly here leaders are making sense of the world for their people and constructing a 'culture' for their organisation.

Hofstede (1993) also notes that the implication of an organisation creating a culture to make sense of the world in which it operates means that a management theory that explains one organisation may not work in another. This gives those that believe that the leaders can change culture, and that it is an important part of their leadership, the ultimate 'get out clause'.

Whilst this may allow those that think 'culture' can be changed to claim they are still right when things do not go as planned and culture does not change, it is almost as if the word 'culture' is again being used in two different senses. The one

used to describe that that they wish to change within organisations, and the other, more akin to Handy's opening remarks on the subject, to do with the different national cultures of the English and French (Handy, 1993) or Grint's heterogeneous, '(agri)culture' concept (Grint, 1995); or indeed, that that is observed by the anthropologist such as Douglas (2002).

Hofstede took the concept of overarching national cultures further. In his first work on work-related national cultures (Hofstede, 1980), he identified four dimensions of culture: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Collectivism, and Masculinity versus Femininity. His theories were distilled from the enormous surveys carried out world-wide within IBM in the late 60s and early 70s. From these he asserted that he had found the national characteristics of culture above that pertained to all.

However, as McSweeney (2002) has shown, there is great difficulty with this analysis. Not only were the huge databases of the IBM surveys microscopically small when broken down into the national samples but they were demonstrably not representative of whole nations. Even if the conclusions Hofstede drew for each national sample were correct, the logical non-sequitur of arguing from the particular to the general was used to project the conclusion from the small, IBM specific, types to the nation as a whole. No attempt was made to analyse what other influences there might have been on the cultures observed; for example, why national rather than racial boundaries? McSweeney's (2002) list goes on. Nevertheless, the point is re-

emphasised here that culture is considered at many different levels and often is used to define the groupings we are looking at.

3.4.3 Creating an Organisational Identity

Taking further the concept that culture is a boundary device used to define a group, Grint (1995) notes that large organisations have people in them that never meet all the others, in fact it is highly unlikely that any one person will meet more than a minor proportion of the totality of people in a large and dispersed organisation employing many different specialisations on geographically separated sites, let alone all those of a nation or race. It therefore requires a leap of faith by each individual that they are of one homogeneous culture with the rest.

'Of course, this leap of imagination, this assumption of cultural homogeneity, can be 'facilitated' by those wishing to encourage such 'imagining'.' (Grint, 1995: 181).

Or again 'leaders can play an active role in reshaping an organisation's culture by ignoring or attending to particular projects or problems and by changing the criteria they use for selecting, rewarding, training and developing followers.' (Bratton et al., 2005: 51).

In this sense, culture in an organisation, or even a nation, can be manipulated by the teaching of its formulated history and values. For a nation this can be done in its classrooms and religious institutions. For an organisation it can be done in its induction processes and work-related social gatherings. In the Royal Air Force it is

done so openly with the wearing of uniform, the induction process that is the initial training for both officers (32 weeks at RAF Cranwell) and non-commissioned ranks (9 weeks at RAF Halton) where recruits are taught how and who to salute, how and when to wear what uniform, how to comport themselves in certain circumstances, the behaviour expected under military law and practice, the punishments that can be meted out to those who do not follow the rules and so forth; the organisation's traditions as well as its history.

The advantage for the Royal Air Force, and all military Services, is that all personnel go through the same induction at the beginning of their military career and no outsiders are brought into the organisation at a subsequent stage. The exemplar amongst the Armed Services here are the Royal Marines who are acknowledged to have a very strong ethos and culture (King, 2004) which they themselves ascribe to their extremely arduous thirty eight weeks initial training which both their commissioned officer corps and other ranks undertake together. That a culture, a way of viewing the world, is deeply ingrained in all three military Services is borne out by Kirke's (2012) work.

This is the sort of 'corporate identity' that Cornelisson et al talks of: *'the set of intrinsic characteristics of 'traits' that give the company its specificity, stability and coherence'* (Cornelisson et al., 2007: S7). The maintenance of this culture is the job of officers and non-commissioned officers right the way up to those at the top. Who, though, is the guardian of the behaviour of those at the top? Like the MP's allowances furore that gripped politics in the Spring of 2009 (see for example The Daily Telegraph

8, 9 and 11 May 2009) where the MPs are following the rules that they themselves set and 'doing nothing wrong' in claiming what expenses that they do, but seem unable to see (or unwilling to admit) that what they are doing is 'just not right' (with a few notable exceptions).

The conclusion must be that it is difficult for a close knit team to monitor its own culture and behaviour. Borrowing from Janis's Groupthink theory, such groups have an inherent belief in their own morality and stereotype the 'enemy', the outsiders, as evil (Janis, 1972). The first thought that therefore strikes is that it should not be unusual that senior teams need outside help with their behaviours to ensure that they are indeed following the path themselves that they lay out for subordinates; just as their decisions can be badly affected by the psychology that Janis explains, so too, surely, can their behaviour or culture. However, the warning that

'[if] organizational identity as articulated by senior managers and as experienced by employees ... are non-aligned ... a range of sub-optimal outcomes is anticipated – including employee disengagement, customer dissatisfaction and general organizational atrophy.' (Cornelissen et al., 2007: S7)

Returning to the dichotomy that some think 'culture' can be changed and others do not, Grint (1995) acknowledges that those who adhere to the anthropological view of culture tend to the thought that it cannot be manipulated, whereas those who tend to the management theorist view feel that it can. Where does this leave groups or teams that are not performing in the way leaders want them

to because their behaviours are not conducive to the required outputs (at least the outputs that those leaders want and feel are not being optimally provided)?

In considering this conundrum, the work of Wittgenstein (1972) showing that the meaning of a sentence is defined by its use is vital. The use that the management theorists have for culture is that it is something that can be manipulated and changes made within an organisation by its leader or leaders while the use that the anthropologists have is that it is something acquired by a group's social interaction and not amenable to change by the external action of a leader. (This is, in itself, unsurprising as anthropologists start from the position that they should only observe and describe to try to understand, they should certainly not interfere. A standpoint that caused intense academic debate over the US military's 2009 deployment of anthropologists with their troops so that they can achieve their desired outcomes most effectively and efficiently.)

The seemingly incompatible views of culture as both able to be manipulated and not being amenable to change by external pressure may not be mutually exclusive views. The two different views might be difficult for the more Platonist philosophers in that the same word is being used to describe two different objects but they are certainly two concepts that can be entertained simultaneously. There are further philosophical problems if one is to apply the view that there is no point discriminating between two things that are described the same and used in the same way (Quine, 1960). However, here there is a considerable difference in the way that the words are used so the form of culture that allows for imposed change is perfectly acceptable. 1

This is the same form of culture that Grint describes in Cadbury's reforming its 'history' (Grint, 1995). This is close to the Social Identity Theory distinction between social identity and organisational identity (Cornelissen et al., 2007) where the anthropological view of culture is the social identity that only changes slowly as groups absorb their circumstances and rarely achieves homogeneity (Douglas, 2002a) while organisational identity is the culture that leaders manipulate to help their people make sense of their corporate circumstances.

For the purposes of this study, the nature of culture that is being observed is that aligned to the Social Identity Theory concept of organisational identity. It is something that the organisation acquires, not something that is inherent in the organisation or its people. The changes that are then looked for by leaders within senior leadership teams can be observed in the behaviours of the team when it is meeting.

However, turning to the comment of one member of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team that to behave in one 'new' way in meetings of the Team would be career suicide (Jupp, 2009a: 97), generates a further line of enquiry. Great trust will be needed both in the leader of the Team that careers will not be adversely affected if members do behave in this way and in the other members of the Team that they will not take undue advantage of these behaviours to further their own careers (Jaques, 1990). Interpersonal trust is, again, vital to ensure that new ways of working, a new culture, will actually happen. The question remains, though, whether trust alone is sufficient.

3.4.4 Maintaining a Different Culture within a Hierarchy

Looking at the culture of an organisation from another angle, the Royal Air Force is an hierarchical organisation and yet the Senior Leadership Team formed under the Chief of the Air Staff was supposed to allow all opinions to be equal (Torpy, 2007). The Senior Leadership Team is, therefore, a non-hierarchical or egalitarian organisation in a hierarchical bureaucracy. The literature on bureaucracy and hierarchy is therefore pertinent to this study.

Weber (1967) praises bureaucracy as the only way for government to improve. Indeed he goes further and states that *'full professionalization of armies can only be realised in bureaucracy'* (Weber, 1967: 222). Since air forces were not dreamt of at the time Weber was writing, it is a fair assumption that he would have included an air force, another form of military organisation, in this category. Other authors also note the success of bureaucracies in solving the problems that large governments have. For example, it has been noted how bureaucracy solved the chaos that abounded in the administration of the United States prior to the nineteenth century where all operating decisions were taken on partisan political grounds and agencies spent their entire appropriations in the first three months of the fiscal year. Appropriations that were made without the benefit of anyone formulating a budget. And where *'no agency or person in the executive branch had authority to oversee the activities of government agencies'* (Barzelay and Armajani, 1992: 3). Bureaucracies had their good points. This is still acknowledged today:

'It is hard to credit that the term "bureaucracy" was once a compliment. Max Weber said that establishing a good bureaucracy was like bringing in an internal combustion engine to replace a horse. Bureaucracy once carried no connotation of stultifying slowness or rigidity. It signalled legal rationality and efficiency.' (Times, 2011).

The Times did use a bit of journalistic licence as Walter Bagehot in the nineteenth century noted that bureaucrats were not perfect and that bureaucracies would care more for their form than what they were created to do (Bagehot, 1889), bureaucrats will care more for routine than results. Handy (1993), whose 'role' organisation equates to a bureaucracy, also notes that it is inevitable, when an organisation's size reaches a certain point, that it creates a 'role' or bureaucratic form.

However, Weber also notes that *'bureaucracies maintain their power in their own state'* (Weber, 1967: 220), that is, they work to maintain the status quo. Many authors since have depicted bureaucracy as sclerotic and ossified, unable to move with the times (see for example: Osborne, 1993, Osborne and Plastrik, 1998, Pinchot and Pinchot, 1994, Barzelay and Armajani, 1992, Jaques, 1990) as the quote from the Times above implies. Handy (1993) also says that his role organisation finds it hard to adapt to changes and can often fail when seismic change means that the role organisation is no longer appropriately set up to cope with the new circumstances rather than change to meet them, in its effort to maintain the status quo it is eventually destroyed by the changes it cannot control.

Most of these authors all demand that bureaucracy is ended and government organisations move to some other form of organisation. Barzelay and Armajani (1992) want them to become outward looking 'customer-driven' organisations rather than inward looking bureaucracies. Osborne and Plastrik (1998) suggest the use of five strategies, their five 'C's to change bureaucratic structures – the core strategy, the consequences strategy, the customer strategy, the control strategy, and the culture strategy to change the DNA of an organisation so that the organisation changes. While Pinchot and Pinchot (1994) want an end to bureaucracy and a rise in 'intelligent organisations' for knowledge workers in the information age that are capable of meeting the rapid changes that the information age demands. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) have a ten point plan to do the same. What is being demanded is a wholesale move away from bureaucracy altogether. Yet there must surely be a risk that the chaos that bureaucracy calmed could then return. How does the new form of organisation solve the problems that bureaucracy did?

Some authors also see this problem. Fredrickson (1996) advocates incremental change to democratic management but implies the bureaucracy remains. He claims that to sweep it away gives short-term gain for long-term pain. While Moon and Norris (2005) claim that managerial innovativeness, which is stifled by bureaucracy, is needed to adopt 'reinventing government' and 'e-government'. To either move away from the bureaucratic guarantees to some form of post entrepreneurial flexibility or stagnate is an over-simplistic world view and historically questionable (Gay, 2000). Blau lists the characteristics of a bureaucracy as: specialisation, a hierarchy of authority, a system of rules, and impersonality (Blau, 1956); the very things that would

put order into the chaos noted by Barzelay and Armajani (1992) in early American administration. If the organisation did not understand the complex system it was in charge of, if people were not treated equally, that sense of chaos and unfairness would return. How then can we ensure that the problems bureaucracy solved do not return under the new systems?

The most promising literature seems to be that of Grid-Group (Douglas, 2007) or Cultural Theory (Thompson, 2008) and looking to see if different cultures can coexist in one organisation. The difficulty here is that the tendency has already been noted above for organisations to impose uniform culture for the sake of homogeneity and peace within the different factions (Harrison, 1972). One author, Fairtlough (2007a), seems to offer a template. Whilst he likens the thinking on hierarchy to hegemony in that hierarchy is so pervasive that it is difficult to think of any other form of organisational culture, he believes that organisations can move 'beyond hierarchy'.

Fairtlough identifies government bureaucracy with a straight hierarchy while companies using assembly-line manufacturing techniques that have become heavily unionised he categorises as heterachies where power is spread among more than one person or body. Finally, he identifies 'responsible autonomy' organisations where individuals or groups have freedom to decide what to do but also have accountability for the outcomes. He cites the changes that John Browne instituted in BP, at first in the exploration and production division but then, later, across the whole company. Fairtlough equates hierarchy, heterachy and responsible autonomy to the three active

domains of grid-group or cultural theory – hierarchy, egalitarianism and market or individualism.

The responsible autonomy induced by Browne in the exploration and production division of BP is coexisting in a hierarchical organisation. He used his power to set up the situation and then handed over much of his power to make it work (Fairtlough, 2007a: 3). However, Browne's star was in the ascendancy and he subsequently became the CEO of BP as a whole and introduced the same structure as he had in the exploration and production division across the entire company. Coexistence did not last long, a homogeneous culture was introduced across the whole organisation much as Harrison (1972) had said it would be. Nevertheless, it is instructive to look at the period where the culture existed as a sub-unit of another culture within BP when Browne was leading the exploration and production division of the company.

Notably, Browne's restructuring of BP seems to have been, in part, designed to avoid the catastrophes that a blame culture induces:

'part of the infrastructure is a culture with an understanding of, and commitment to, the long-term interests of the whole organization.' (Fairtlough, 2007c: 73)

Yet BP subsequently suffered a series of environmental disasters that were not in the long-term interests of the company. It could be argued that this part of the change does not seem to have worked. However, as many of the disasters happened after Browne left the organisation, it may be that these problems, and certainly the most

serious, could not be ascribed to his changes but to the new management that replaced him. More research would be necessary to ascertain the answers to these issues.

Fairtlough (2007a) acknowledges that the 'responsible autonomy' Browne set up relied upon Browne using his hierarchical power. Browne has to impose the system upon his subordinates. Browne himself is obviously allowed the autonomy to run his division as he wishes, though this begs two questions. What would have happened if Browne had remained head of the exploration and production division with the rest of the company continuing in a hierarchical form? And, what would have happened if Browne had left BP rather than going on to become CEO?

To answer the second question we are left to speculate as there is no evidence as to what might have happened. We can only surmise that if an equally 'forward thinking' (assuming Browne's ideas are better suited to the future of business) person was appointed in his place then the organisational form would have continued. If his replacement was hidebound by the hegemony of hierarchy, then Browne's experiment with a different organisational form or culture would have been short lived.

In his study of the Morning Star company (Hamel, 2011) describes an organisation that would fit Fairtlough's responsible autonomy model that gives us an insight into some of what might have arisen in the case of the first question. One of the problems that arises in Morning Star is that people wishing to leave the company have difficulty applying for positions elsewhere as they have no job descriptor that is recognised in other, hierarchical organisations (Hamel, 2011). It is difficult for the

organisations to which they are applying to gauge their span of responsibility and so where they would fit into their organisation, let alone the applicant's worth to the organisation.

Of course this is also an advantage to Morning Star, as not only do their people mostly like working there and so have high loyalty (a much cited measure of a good company), but also as other organisations find it difficult to place them, their incentive not to move, their loyalty, is further increased. Applying this to the BP model, where Browne's division was run on responsible autonomy lines within an otherwise hierarchical company and assuming this was long-lived, it is likely that those working within the division would find that their personal competitiveness within BP as whole was compromised. They would find it ever more difficult to compete for positions further 'up' the company outside the division. In this case it is likely that the clash of cultures within the company as a whole would come to the fore and homogeneity be forced upon the division in some form as Harrison described (1972) unless some compelling conditions pertained to stop it. If this problem did not arise then one could conclude that the hierarchy had not really been removed from Browne's division as the structural form must have been reasonably easy to map across to the formal hierarchy.

The compelling conditions necessary to prevent the backsliding of Browne's division to a hierarchical structure must be deduced from the evidence. First, the division must work well as a large team. If the reason they did not work well was responsible autonomy then it would be a pointless organisational form. All the issues

of the formation and maintenance of a large team discussed above must apply. Additionally, the leadership of such a team is going to be more important than Wageman et al (2008) lay out as the leader must be trusted both within the team and by those within the rest of the organisation. Within the team because they need to know that the leader will overcome job comparison problems that will allow those within the division to progress their careers in the organisation as a whole, and without the team as those in charge of the rest of the organisation need to trust the leader as to weightiness of the jobs done or the suitability of the candidate from within the division to do a job in the hierarchical part of the company at a certain level.

Overall, there must be a perceived organisational benefit, seen by both those outside and inside the division, for which compromises are being made. Those within the division are suborning a personal benefit, that of hierarchical recognition which can be used in future job advancement, for organisational benefit. Only great trust in their leader that s/he will resolve this issue could prevent exodus or a demand for that recognition; ie a return to some form of recognised hierarchy. Only if those outside the division see the organisational benefit and trust the leader's judgement of those within the division will this happen. Of course, if those outside the division see the organisational benefit of the new organisational form then they would surely change the rest of the organisation to fit that form unless there was some other compelling reason for a different organisational form to pertain elsewhere in the company. Thus a well formed team, good leadership, great trust and a compelling reason for different cultures are prerequisites for them to exist.

However, it must be noted that there are important differences from the BP and Morning Star examples to the case of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team. In the BP case we are looking at a sub-division of the company, in the Morning Star a whole company while in the Royal Air Force case it is the whole of the top of the organisation, not a division below the top or the whole organisation, and in the military not a commercial company. When not working within the Senior Leadership Team meetings, the members of the Team retain very strictly defined hierarchical positions and those who will further the careers of the more 'junior' members of the Team are also in the Senior Leadership Team, and so understand the construct. The Team members work both in the hierarchical organisation and in the less hierarchical Team. The case studies from Fairtlough and Hemel need careful examination when applied to the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team.

Furthermore, as a military organisation, Royal Air Force air marshals have no other 'companies' that they can move to. The UK only has one air force and countries do not often employ foreign nationals to run their military organisations! British military officers do find second careers after their military service and often use their well defined hierarchical roles to compete for positions outside the military. These though are second careers not a continuation of the same career.

3.4.5 Summary on Culture

In sum, culture is a word with multifarious meanings making it hard to make sense of the literature. There is the anthropological use which describes that which is observed in a social group and is acquired over an extended period and is akin to the

social identity from Social Identity Theory (Cornelissen et al., 2007, Tajfel, 1981, Tajfel, 1974). This, although constantly adapting to circumstance, is not something that can be changed. Then there is the management theorists' use of culture as something that is amenable to being changed however difficult that may turn out to be. This form of culture is a sense-making tool, acquired by the people in an organisation to order the world in which the organisation works. It is akin to the Social Identity Theory use of organisational identity (Cornelissen et al., 2007).

In both senses of the word culture, it is often used to define a boundary between people, to allow of a description of the 'in-group' or an 'out-group' (Grint, 1995). For the observation of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team, the sense of the word as the organisational identity or culture which leaders use to help the people in their organisation to make sense of their organisational circumstances is the meaning attached to the use of the word 'culture'.

This study will be looking to see if the Senior Leadership Team behaviours change to incorporate those that the Chief of the Air Staff, the leader of the Royal Air Force, wants to inculcate in the Team. The more collegiate behaviours associated with a Team that is genuinely sharing information and ideas, and stress testing plans and strategies of colleagues, for the greater good of the organisation rather than themselves. That is, genuinely behaving as a senior leadership team (Wageman et al., 2008) or as like a high-performing team as its size will allow (Sheard et al., 2009, Kakabadse, 1991).

Lastly, within culture, this study will be looking to see how one culture can be sustained within another, different culture. How non-hierarchical collegiate behaviours can be sustained within a strict hierarchical organisation so that opinions may indeed be aired without fear or favour.

From the little relevant literature available, it would seem that first a strongly performing team is necessary putting emphasis on the team needs identified by Wageman et al (2008). There would need to be seen to be an organisational benefit from the existence of the different culture and a compelling reason for the separate culture. Thus:

- a well formed team,
- good leadership,
- great trust and
- a compelling reason for different cultures

are prerequisites for them to exist.

There would have to be strong leadership of the team, which induced a good level of trust by the team in their leader, further emphasising the requirement for good leadership which is already a necessity for the formation of large teams. Indeed, a well formed team that has a compelling reason to exist and is governed by strong leadership are issues all covered in the formation of a large team (Wageman et al., 2008), the one remaining criterion is trust which will be discussed next.

3.5

Trust

Trust is both a prerequisite for Mission Command to work (Bungay, 2005) and a necessity for the existence of different cultures within an organisation. The former issue made it a major factor in the business of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team and thus one that had to be examined in the literature review as to its effects on creating such an entity. The latter issue bears out the requirement to examine it. This section will, therefore, look at how trust is conceived in the literature as mostly a cognitive concept but with some affective aspects to it. The examination of the literature then bears out the complexity of the concept of trust and the difficulty of bringing that concept to bear in an academic analysis. Having laid the foundations for analysing the trust as it applies to the case study of this thesis, this section goes on to look at how trust is built within a team and how it may be easily destroyed. One factor already examined in this literature review, homogeneity, emerges as an important factor in the development of trust and is further examined here.

3.5.1 Trust as a Cognitive Concept

Much has been written in the literature on trust on the transaction costs within and between commercial companies or between the public and commercial and public bodies, see for example (Llewellyn et al., 2013, Rus and Iglic, 2005, Nooteboom et al., 1997, Gambetta, 1988c, Lane and Bachmann, 1996, Lane and Bachmann, 1998) less on interpersonal trust for example (McAllister, 1995a, Coleman, 2009) and very little about trust directly in the military (Dunn, 2013), while Cox's (2007) piece which was commissioned for the first meeting of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team

looked at trust within the military. Also, as Stogdill (1974: 259) once said of leadership itself, there seem to be almost as many definitions of trust as there are people writing about the subject.

McAllister (1995a) makes the attempt to define trust as a combination of others' earlier definitions. From (Porter et al., 1975, Deutsch, 1973, Cook and Wall, 1980, Shapiro, 1990, Luhmann, 1979) McAllister defines trust as '*the extent to which a person is confident in and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another.*' (McAllister, 1995a: 25). He goes on to say that trust has both cognitive and affective foundations. The cognitive foundation is based in rational extension of incomplete knowledge of the other person while the affective foundation consists of the emotional bonds between individuals that can ultimately provide the basis for trust (McAllister, 1995a: 26).

Nooteboom et al break trust down into competence trust and intentional trust (1997: 311). For McAllister, these would be elements of cognition-based trust. Rus and Iglic have a similar definition of trust and say it is obtained directly by personal experience of a person or group or indirectly by observation of an institution (2005: 374). Again, elements of a cognitive foundation for trust.

Mishra and Spreitzer define trust as '*a dynamic construct reflecting an individual's beliefs about person-environment relationships.*' (1999: 575), although this allows for an element of emotion, Mishra and Spreitzer build the beliefs from the way organisations and managers treat individuals, so this too is a form of cognition based trust.

In their article on inter-agency collaboration in the public sector, Hudson et al claim there is a lack of understanding of the term 'trust'. They define it as *'a device for coping with the freedom of other persons – their freedom to disappoint our expectations through betrayal, defection and exit.'* following Luhmann's (1979) definition, (Hudson et al., 1999: 249). They go on to say that *'trust may be a by-product of familiarity and friendship, both of which imply that those involved have some knowledge of each other and some respect for each other's welfare.'* (Hudson et al., 1999: 250). While the concept of friendship would allow for an emotional bond, the basis of knowledge implies a much more rational, clinical concept.

Llewellyn et al suggest that trust is *'established within the context of shared values ... along with knowledge gained'* (Llewellyn et al., 2013: 2) which also implies a largely cognitive concept. Brookes and Fahy do, however, note that trust is a multifaceted notion involving individual and instrumental perceptions (Brookes and Fahy, 2013: 240). Meanwhile, Cox characterised trust as one of the great human intangibles and as

'an amalgam of many factors including honesty, openness, integrity and communication but which has a metaphysical quality which is more than the sum of these things' (Cox, 2007: 1).

Doney et al outline the five cognitive trust-building processes and say that trust evolves *'when trustors perceive that targets share their values and beliefs, and lasts as long as trustors remain confident that targets' motives are benevolent'* (1998: 616).

These are rational responses based on knowledge of a person or institution built up by experience and the openness of the 'target'. Again emotion is excluded.

3.5.2 The Affective Domain of Trust

In reviewing the literature, many writers fall firmly into a cognition definition of trust with little or no acknowledgement of its affective side. (Putnam, 2000, Pagden, 1988, Williams, 1988, Good, 1988, Dasgupta, 1988, Gambetta, 1988b, Lorenz, 1988, Meyerson et al., 1996, Creed and Miles, 1996, Kipris, 1996, Powell, 1996, Lewicki and Bunker, 1996, Sheppard and Tachinsky, 1996, Sitkin and Stickel, 1996, and Child, 1996) all take a cognitive view of trust along with (Nooteboom et al., 1997, Rus and Iglic, 2005, Mishra and Spreitzer, 1999, Hudson et al., 1999, and Doney et al., 1998) noted above. Though (Powell, 1996, Lewicki and Bunker, 1996, Llewellyn et al., 2013, Sitkin and Stickel, 1996, Child, 1996, and Dasgupta, 1988) allow for some element of emotion, the first two in their concept of identification based trust (though they take a rational approach to deciding on this) and the second three with the notion that a common set of values (and in Child's case also with a common concept of moral obligation) but again there is a tendency towards a rational, cognitive basis to decide on these commonalities. Dasgupta (1988) notes that bonds develop with repeated encounters though there is no elaboration on what these bonds might entail.

By contrast, (McAllister, 1995a, and Cummings and Bromiley, 1996) specifically argue for the affective state of trust and (Burt, 1996, Tyler and DeGoey, 1996, and Hardy et al., 1998) all allow for some sense of emotional reason to trust. Lane (1996) specifically notes that *'to posit common values and norms as the **sole** basis of trust is*

as one sided as the notion of calculative trust.' (Lane, 1996: 8) though she does not necessarily allow for much emotion in the rationality of deciding on whether common values or norms exist. However, it must be noted here that most of these authors are discussing trust of an individual or group in another group or between organisations rather than solely interpersonal trust between individuals within an organisational setting.

For interpersonal trust, within an organisational setting or not, it seems intuitive that emotional intelligence has a part to play as it is our judgement of people that affects our decision to trust them. In making a judgement about a person, certainly at the beginning of an acquaintance, the decision is as much an emotional one as it is a rational one (Goleman, 1995). When we combine this with our propensity to trust (Mayer et al., 1995: 715), which must also be an emotional response rather than a rational one, our emotional intelligence becomes even more important as we need to know ourselves and our propensity to trust as well as our emotional judgement of other people when making a decision to trust them.

For those who do look to the affective side of trust, they believe it to be built up over a long time eg (McAllister, 1995a, Lewicki and Bunker, 1996), their analysis is that it takes considerable time to develop. Indeed, in Lewicki and Bunker's (1996) case this is the last level to which a trusting relationship develops and many relationships do not achieve this depth. The question here remains to be asked: why would you **start** to trust another person? Clearly the emotional bonds built up over time do not

answer this question completely, nor does the experience necessary for the cognitive based trust.

Trust starts somewhere and most likely before the full experience can be gained that allows the cognitive or affective trust so far discussed to take effect. This is akin to Hardy et al's notion of spontaneous trust (Hardy et al., 1998: 78-79). A person's propensity to trust (Mayer et al., 1995) must also be part of the answer to the question of why start to trust. But so too must be that person's judgement about the other person upon 'meeting' them; though that meeting may not be face-to-face in modern working environments.

In their research on trust within temporary groups, Meyerson et al state that '*people have to wade in on trust*' (1996: 170) and let their subsequent experience demonstrate whether they were right to do so. There is also a feeling in their writing that trust has several levels as they imply that a person might be trusted with certain things but not with others. They expand on this by stating that the sort of swift trust extended at the start of a temporary group is like the thin trust identified by Putnam (2000) but that thick trust depends on experience (Meyerson et al., 1996: 179). This accords with the experience of setting up virtual organisations for business purposes where those whom you had not met in the flesh had to be trusted to carry out their side of the bargain for the organisation to work at all (Nir, 2010). Certainly, the evidence shows that where trust is extended and results in a positive experience, trust increases; '*trust begets trust*' (Creed and Miles, 1996: 33), see also (Gambetta, 1988a: 234).

The reasons for trusting a particular person or set of persons are not explained. They could range from expediency because choice is largely withdrawn; for example the team is not chosen by you, your choice is either to work with it or leave. Through to the instant judgements you make on meeting a person. These judgements will naturally be informed by any history that you may know of them; what organisation they belong to and your impression of that organisation (Sydow, 1998: 43) as well as any experience you have of dealing with it. Nevertheless, that judgement will be based on 'first impressions', an emotional construct that our brains make in a very short space of time (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008: 77) that is furthered by deliberately building emotional bonds '*friends trust one another*' (Goleman, 2000: 84). The impression of the organisation or the person to be trusted will also be an emotional construct. Thus the initial decision to trust seems to have three elements: the trustor's propensity to trust, a cognitive domain so far as it extends (acknowledging that in some cases this domain will be small or even virtually nonexistent), and an affective domain that is there from the beginning and that will also grow over time.

The cognitive domain at this start point of trust is not just affected by prior knowledge of a person or the organisation to which they belong but also by various rules, regulations, laws and contracts as well as by the power exercised (Lieberkind and Oliver, 1998, Deakin and Wilkinson, 1998, Hardy et al., 1998). All these things promote predictability in an uncertain and worrying area. Any predictability in the behaviour of a person in whom the trustor is contemplating reposing trust is likely to be helpful in the initial decision. Conversely, and counterproductively, total reliance on rules and contracts and so forth is not trust but a substitute for it. If all a person

can know is that another always behaves in a certain way because they are forced to behave in that way, then there can be no build up of the cognitive domain of trust because there is no way of knowing how they would behave when their behaviour is not so constrained.

3.5.3 The Complexity of Trust

The concept of trust, then, seems to be more complex than some authors allow for. Or at least they are only concerned with one aspect of trust. It has been acknowledged that trust is a complex issue:

'the full complexity of the problem only becomes visible when the relationship between interpersonal action and social institutions is considered in the light of the named aspect of trust.' (Bachmann, 1998: 307)

Rahn et al also note that *'individuals' beliefs about what other people are like incorporate an astonishing variety of information sources.'* And that *'a complex phenomenon deserves a complex explanation.'* (2009: 1659).

It seems that trust is a multifaceted phenomenon and that in analysing it to try to make sense of it, some, at least for the purposes of interpersonal trust, have oversimplified the issue such that trust in their models is but a pale imitation of the concept commonly referred to. There are good reasons for this, for *'as the number of latent variables included in a model increases, a researcher's ability to fit models, even those with strong theoretical support, decreases.'* (McAllister, 1995a: 43). Or it may go even further, the more we try to analyse a complex thing the further it seems to slip

from our grasp as we try to give a rational, understandable explanation to what Cox characterised as a great human intangible (2007). As Christopher Marlowe said '*Sweet Analytics, 'tis thou hast ravished me.*' (Doctor Faustus (1604) act 1, scene 1). But as Deakin and Wilkinson note '*Economic analysis is right to be sceptical of 'the idea of a disembodied notion of trust floating around somewhere in the social ether'*' (Deakin and Wilkinson, 1998: 168). It is not acceptable just to say that trust is a meatier concept than rationality can make of it. Some definition and explanation is demanded.

All the literature reviewed defines trust in some way against risk (eg:Llewellyn et al., 2013: 261), risk that someone will take advantage of the person doing the trusting. To say that you can have a façade of trust (Hardy et al., 1998: 67) where predictability of behaviour is the only condition becomes difficult, provided that the predictability is not compelled. As long as the predictability of behaviour remains correct then the 'façade of trust' is indistinguishable from trust. Whatever the reasons for acting in a certain way really are, we cannot know what difference there is between them and the reasons we hope are making that person act in that way. In the common parlance, if it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it is a duck; more properly there is no point in trying to divine a difference where none can be proved (Quine, 1960). McAllister's definition of trust as it applies to interpersonal trust in an organisational setting is, therefore, sufficient for the purposes of this thesis '*the extent to which a person is confident in and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another.*' (McAllister, 1995a: 25)

Most observers note that trust is based on some interactions over time that breeds familiarity, (Nooteboom et al., 1997, Gulati, 1995, Dodgson, 1993, McAllister, 1995b, Roy and Dugal, 1998). Those interactions can be doing some sort of business together, learning together in research projects and so forth. Coleman in his thesis complains that there is no writing on the day-to-day actions required for leaders to build trust (Coleman, 2009: 144) and himself settles on the mundane everyday activities though he does not spell out what, in everyday mundane activities, is supposed to go on. Like most other writers, the mundane everyday activity is supposed to demonstrate the elements of their model or definition of trust.

3.5.4 Building Trust

Here one researcher is significantly different. Hurley breaks down trust into ten factors that affect the person being asked to trust. Hurley defines trust as '*confident reliance on someone when you are in a position of vulnerability.*' (Hurley, 2006: 56). This definition is close to other definitions as it implies there is risk in your reliance on someone else derived from your position of vulnerability. His model then splits trust down into the following ten factors, the first three of which he states are not malleable by the person wishing to be trusted whereas the remaining seven can be affected by the direct and conscious behaviour of that person: Risk tolerance, Level of adjustment, Relative power, Security, Number of similarities, Alignment of interests, Benevolent concern, Capability, Predictability and integrity, Level of communication (Hurley, 2006: 58).

Like most authors, Hurley is working from a rational reason to trust and therefore his factors can all be bettered by positive experiences of the trustor when the trustee clearly demonstrates behaviour that raises the levels of the last seven factors. These will not affect the trustor's propensity to trust. The propensity to trust is bound up with the first three factors. However, the last seven factors will not only affect the cognitive domain but also the affective domain. A note of caution here is necessary '*self-conscious attempts to display social intelligence can often backfire*' (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008: 78). Social intelligence here is the empathy and attunement that a leader has with his or her followers. A leader's ability to read the emotional currents in a room and talk to people in a way that engages them rather than alienating them (Seal et al., 2006). Work on Hurley's factors in a socially inept way may give the experience that could help in the cognitive domain but is likely to be counterproductive in the affective domain.

For most then, trust is something intentionally placed in another person based on experience of their competence, openness, integrity and honesty and therefore their likely future behaviour. Trust has some rational basis in how interactions between them have turned out in the past as well as in the feelings that every person inevitably has about another person and the organisation to which they belong. Even though '*the relative importance of various attributes to an individual is different*' and '*terms such as 'honest' have different connotations to different people*' (Tajfel, 1981: 106) the conglomeration of these things in different measure for each individual does build trust providing they are done in a socially adept way so that both the affective and cognitive domains are worked upon.

The observers note that repeated ties and increased cooperation generate trust between individuals and that this trust then extends to whole organisations. There is evidence that trust endures beyond individuals once it has been built between companies as trust seems to remain when the individuals that built it up move on (Dodgson, 1993). Roy and Dugal note that *'homogeneous groups are more trusting'* and that *'individuals are more trusting of those who share similar mental structures with themselves'* (1998: 565). While McAllister notes that:

'individuals tend to group themselves with others on the basis of objective attributes such as race, age, and gender and that such internal classifications influence beliefs and attitudes. Individuals are more likely to perceive out-group members as dishonest, untrustworthy, and uncooperative than they are to perceive in-group members.' (1995a:28).

Thus the culture or cultures within a group and the relative homogeneity of that group will affect how easy it is for them to trust one another.

The question remains, though, as to whether models of trust and how it develops derived from research in commercial companies, and from interaction between individuals and public service providers, is applicable to a senior military team. Is the context of a military team sufficiently different to invalidate the evidence from the other contexts? At least for the studies that looked specifically at interpersonal trust (McAllister, 1995a, Hurley, 2006, Coleman, 2009) the issues examined related to people rather than the particular institutions that they worked in and equally pertain in the military. Therefore, while the context needs to be borne in

mind, it is a fair assumption that the ways of building trust will be similar enough. This research did not look specifically at how the trust might build just whether it did. More research would be needed to confirm whether the context had a material effect on the measures used.

3.5.5 Systemic Destruction of Trust

Cox (2007) considered the relative homogeneity of the officer corps of the British Army in the 1st World War as a factor that would lead one to expect trust to flourish. Here trust could easily be presumed because of the relative similarity and like-mindedness of the British Army officer corps at that time, which came from a similar social class, upbringing and education. In reality it did not exist because of the actions of the command chain, actions brought about by systemic rather than personal issues.

General Headquarters under General Haig arrogated to itself the right to promote or sack all officers serving in the Field Army in France. The only way that the technical superiority that defence had acquired over attack, because of off-field artillery, machine guns and other military technological advances, could be overcome was with the fighting spirit of the soldier (a conclusion common to the three major European powers in the First World War (see also Sheffield, 2001)).

Any officer who dared to tell General Headquarters that its attack plans would not work, for whatever reason, clearly was not the right calibre officer and was removed. So too were those who failed in attempting to carry out the plans as they too could not be of the right character. Removal was so prevalent that the Army, in its

own inimitable way, invented a verb for the action – being ‘degummed’, from the French ‘dégommé’ (Cox, 2007: 6). As a result, open and honest communication between the front line and Headquarters in that war all but ceased with dire consequences for all concerned. General Headquarters believed that those on the front line were incapable of military operations while being ignorant of the true conditions that the front line had to fight in; the front line believed that General Headquarters were incompetent and would remove them whatever they did (Cox, 2007).

In essence, Cox showed that systemic issues could destroy trust just as easily as personal ones, no matter how culturally homogeneous the people involved. The organisational context within which people are working is, therefore, important in the generation and preservation of trust. It is important not just for the reputational issues of the organisation and its effect on the affective domain but also because of systemic issues that may prevent the open communication that is required for trust to be built.

3.5.6 Homogeneity and Trust

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974, Tajfel, 1975, Tajfel, 1978) states that there are *‘many social settings in which people primarily think of themselves and others in terms of their particular group memberships’* (Ellemers et al., 2004: 461). The object for any team must be to allow them to:

‘focus on the collective properties that are relevant to the situation at hand, while neglecting the “noise” of other variations that occur among individuals within the same group’ (Ellemers et al., 2004: 462)

That is, while doing activities that are supposed to create trust, emphasis must be laid on the similarities of the members of the group. While doing activities in which great innovation is required, emphasis must be laid on the differences within the group. The question inevitably arises as to whether these things are mutually incompatible within a single group or whether facilitation can overcome those incompatibilities sufficiently to gain the advantages of both.

Group homogeneity is important in generating trust as the fifth of Hurley’s (2006) factors, similarity, indicates, but it is vitally dependant on other factors. However, group heterogeneity has been shown to be important in terms of team performance such as creative ways to solve problems (Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008, Carpenter, 2002, Wiersema and Bantel, 1992). A balance needs to be struck between emphasising similarity to engender trust and using different views and perspectives of the world to assist innovative ideas to be generated.

3.5.7 Summary on Trust

In summary on trust, there is a large volume of literature on the subject that, for the most part, concentrates on trust between organisations or between individuals and organisations. There is less written on interpersonal trust. Equally, the majority examine trust from a cognitive standpoint and a few acknowledge the affective

domain, though notably one sees the folly of not looking to the affective domain (Lane and Bachmann, 1998). Looking at the work on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995, Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008) it would seem that not only one's propensity to trust (Mayer et al., 1995) but also one's first impression of others is important in a decision to trust another.

Trust then will build by working on both the affective and cognitive domains of trust by the mundane everyday actions of people (Coleman, 2009). One author, Hurley (2006) does however put forward a research based model of how to increase interpersonal trust based on ten factors, seven of which are malleable by the person wishing to be trusted:

- Alignment of interests,
- Benevolent concern,
- Capability,
- Predictability and integrity,
- Level of communication,
- Security,
- and Number of similarities.

Genuineness in the approach to these factors will have to be displayed not to destroy trust in the affective domain (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008, Seal et al., 2006).

Homogeneity is important in developing trust as the factor of similarity in Hurley's (2006) model demonstrates, it is also demonstrated to be so in Social Identity

Theory (Ellemers et al., 2004). However, even in organisations where there is considerable homogeneity, systemic factors can destroy trust more effectively than homogeneity can promote it as Cox (2007) showed with his explanation of events in the 1st World War.

In large groups, facilitation will be needed to ensure that factors promoting trust are emphasised while those, including systemic ones are ameliorated or put to one side. The facilitation will also have to ensure that power is used carefully as it too will affect the formation of a team and the building of trust.

3.6

Conclusion

3.6.1 Team Formation

In summary, for teams, size seems to be a contentious issue. The vast majority of writers deem that a team is a small entity, usually not larger than nine people (See for example Sheard et al., 2009, Levrau and Berghe, 2009, Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2009, Patzelt et al., 2008) while only a few describe teams as being able to be relatively large entities (Wageman et al., 2008, Handy, 1993). Most of the former writers also omit from the list of teams those groups that do not make decisions. Both of these identifying features of teams – small size and making decisions – are defining for the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team as it is not small nor does it make decisions. This limits the usefulness of many of the theories and empirical observations of how teams develop and what their needs are as these are bound to the small, decision-

making groups and, certainly for Sheard et al (2009), it is an inalienable part of team development.

It might be useful to observe if the issues for these smaller tightly focussed teams are also issues for the larger Team but better to compare something more similar. Even Wageman et al's (2008) observations on how teams develop and what they require to make them great teams is devoted to the small, top, decision-making team rather than any of the other three larger types of team defined by them. Therefore, it might be instructive to observe if the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team goes through the five stages and two decision points of a small decision-making team's development (Sheard et al., 2009) but as they demand decision-making as part of that progress and the Senior Leadership Team is not constituted to make decisions this is likely to be nugatory. Tuckman's (1965) model for the development of small groups may be useful in noting whether a large team goes through the same stages. It would be most beneficial to examine whether the Senior Leadership Team has the same needs as the small, top, decision-making team to make it great (Wageman et al., 2008) as they claim that this is the requirement for larger teams as well.

The other aspect of size that will need to be observed with care is the universally accepted issue of the difficulty of getting wide engagement of all members of a large team, the group size paradox (Esteban and Ray, 2001). The need for good facilitation of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team and whether it succeeds in achieving wide engagement of all members of the Team will be of particular interest. This is especially so as the Team is larger than those experimented with in the

literature (Hsu, 1985, Gallupe et al., 1992, Vogel et al., 1987, Davison, 2001, Esteban and Ray, 2001, Bass and Norton, 1951, Gibb, 1951, Barker, 1965).

The behaviours in the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team will need careful observation as to whether they are in some sense a charade of cooperation (Wageman et al., 2008) rather than genuine better working practices. Also an individual's tendency to behave in a Team to better their position at the expense of other members or to form sub groups for similar purposes (Jaques, 1990, Bratton et al., 2005) will need to be monitored within the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team and whether, if it does arise, it can be dealt with over the life of the Team.

Lastly, the issues of team homogeneity and heterogeneity will arise within the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team. The effect on discussions in the difficult, ambiguous, strategic sphere will test the cohesiveness of the Team which is supposed to be enhanced by homogeneity and the creativity of the Team which is supposed to be enhanced with heterogeneity.

3.6.2 Power

Power is used in the vernacular as a possession and many researchers also use this form of language (Mintzberg, 1983, Kanter, 1979, Wildavsky and Douglas, 1983). All refer in some way to the source of someone's power be that from their position, their knowledge or the respect that they gain within a certain community. Handy (1993), in particular, notes that a leader's source of power may have little or no relevance to a particular follower which would render the leader's power to be of little or no effect. Other authors take this idea further categorising power as a relationship

between the leader and follower so that the follower is just as important as the leader. If the follower does not decide to do as s/he is told, the leader is effectively powerless (Bratton et al., 2005, Grint, 1995). That the follower has to be complicit in obeying a leader has been known for a long time (see Ward, 1639).

However, power has an effect on behaviours within a group and the trust between its members and these things are interrelated. If a person has a source of power within a group that power is either latent or being used. If it is used and followers comply there will always be the question over the relationship as to whether the use of power was appropriate and whether the relationship was enhanced or damaged by it. If power was used and a follower was not complicit there will inevitably be an adverse affect on the relationship, and the trust between the two will also decline as part of that relationship (Hurley, 2006).

Finally, the presence of power in a hierarchy will encourage certain behaviours. Some will react to its presence in a way to enhance their own standing and therefore their perceived prospects even if they act in concert with the team to start with (Jaques, 1990). Behaviours will always be tainted with the suspicion of ulterior, personal motive. Thus, within the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team, with power sources always present from the strict hierarchical nature of the organisation, the effects of power will always have to be of concern. Facilitation of the meetings will need to take account of the issue to mitigate its effects.

3.6.3 Culture

Culture is a word that is used in many different ways. There is the anthropological use which describes that which is observed in a social group and is acquired over an extended period (Douglas, 1999, Douglas, 2007, Thompson, 2008) and which other writers on management subscribe to (for example Meek, 1998) and is akin to the social identity from Social Identity Theory (Cornelissen et al., 2007, Tajfel, 1981, Tajfel, 1974). This, although constantly adapting to circumstance, is not something that can be changed.

Then there is the management theorists' use of culture as something that is amenable to being changed however difficult that may turn out to be (for example Handy, 1993, Hofstede et al., 1990, Rowland and Higgs, 2008, Hooper and Potter, 2000) akin to the Social Identity Theory use of organisational identity (Cornelissen et al., 2007). This sense of organisational culture is something acquired by groups and is a way of understanding organisational life. In both senses of the use of the word culture, it is often used to define a boundary between people, to allow of a description of the 'in-group' or an 'out-group' (Grint, 1995).

For the observation of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team, the sense of culture or organisational identity is that which leaders use to help the people in their organisation to make sense of their organisational circumstances. The group then acquires the 'culture'. Thus this study will be looking to see if the Senior Leadership Team behaviours change to incorporate those that the Chief of the Air Staff, the leader of the Royal Air Force, wants to inculcate in the Team. The more collegiate behaviours

associated with a Team that is genuinely sharing information and ideas and stress testing plans and strategies of colleagues for the greater good of the organisation rather than themselves. That is, genuinely behaving as a senior leadership team (Wageman et al., 2008) or as like a high-performing team as its size will allow (Sheard et al., 2009, Kakabadse, 1991).

Lastly, within culture, this study will be looking to see how one culture can be sustained within another, different culture. How non-hierarchical, collegiate behaviours can be sustained within a strict hierarchical organisation. From the little literature available, it would seem that first a strongly performing team is necessary, putting emphasis on the team needs identified by Wageman et al (2008). There should be an organisational benefit from the existence of the different culture and a compelling reason for the separate culture. The following are prerequisites for a separate culture to exist in a hierarchy:

- a well formed team,
- good leadership,
- great trust and
- a compelling reason for different cultures.

There would have to be strong leadership of the team that induced a good level of trust by the team in their leader further emphasising the requirement for good leadership which is already a necessity for the formation of large teams.

3.6.4 Trust

The literature on trust reveals a preponderance of authors who look into the cognitive domain of trust. Some writers such as (McAllister, 1995a, Lane, 1996, Cummings and Bromiley, 1996, Lewicki and Bunker, 1996) acknowledge the existence of the affective domain; they all see this as a domain eventually reached by some relationships. Looking at the work on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995, Goleman, 2000, Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008) there seems to be an issue left out of the earlier writing, that of the emotional decision to trust someone that comes from the sort of first impression that is made of them. This is different to someone's propensity to trust (Mayer et al., 1995), which is inherent to their own emotional state, and is an emotional decision made about the person to be trusted.

While the propensity to trust is largely not affected by those wishing to be trusted, most authors consider that much can be done in the cognitive domain to increase trust and only when a relationship has travelled so far down the cognitive domain does the affective domain become important, see for example (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). However, the affective domain must be important from the beginning as first impressions count. It can also be affected by the subsequent actions and behaviours of those wishing to be trusted, provided that the actions of the those wishing to be trusted are socially adept (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008). The everyday mundane actions (Coleman, 2009) that increase trust, such as those represented by Hurley's (2006) ten factors, can help increase trust in both the affective and cognitive domain.

There is a tension between the homogeneity that helps to build trust and the heterogeneity needed for some aspects of team performance (Hurley, 2006, Wiersema and Bantel, 1992, Carpenter, 2002). Once trust is being built, it can be used to allow any heterogeneity within a team to produce the diversity of ideas. Though it is noted that excessive diversity is likely to be counterproductive (Carpenter, 2002, Wiersema and Bantel, 1992).

The observations of the Senior Leadership Team will need to note the indications of the build up of trust. Not just the effects of homogeneity and heterogeneity but also the starting positions of members, their propensity to trust, their initial emotional judgement of the other members of the Team and how the cognitive and affective domains grow.

3.6.5 Summary

Overall, the observations of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team will need to look at these four areas: whether and how such a large group can operate and develop as a team, whether trust is enhanced between them as individuals, how the presence of power and what use it is put to will affect them, and how their culture is changed as the Team develops and whether that new, different culture can be sustained within the organisation.

The case study will examine the 5-point model from Wageman et al (2008) used to build a large consultative or informational team:

- the need for a team;

- a clear purpose;
- the right composition;
- the right structure, support and coaching;
- and leadership.

It will look carefully at what is necessary for the 'right' composition as this review has argued for inclusion of all members of a large informational or consultative team. It argued for this no matter what their behaviour, to ensure the right information flows to or from the right place and the correct extent of consultation takes place.

The case study will also scrutinise whether the group size paradox can be effectively dealt with by facilitation in a large team so that all members contribute to the team. The case study will also consider the affect of facilitation and leadership on the behaviours that will be imported into the team by including all possible members no matter their behaviour. The effect of power within the team will also be studied to see whether leadership and facilitation can ensure that it does not have an adverse affect on the relationships and trust within the team meaning that the team cannot achieve its purpose.

The case study will look at the culture within the team; whether it changes from a strictly hierarchical one to one where all opinions are considered equal. If it does, and this new culture is sustained within the hierarchy of the overall organisation, the review of the literature indicates that the reasons should be:

- a well formed team,
- good leadership'
- great trust,
- a compelling reason for a different culture

The case study will try to confirm this conclusion.

Finally, since the issue of trust is central to the ability of the team to work with a different culture, the case study will examine the build up of interpersonal trust within the team. Whether this happens in a hierarchy and how the use of power affects it.

However, before this thesis examines the data from the case study of the Senior Leadership Team, the next chapter will look at the research methodology, research methods and the design of the research in more detail.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND DESIGN

The previous chapter, the literature review, set out the issues that may be important in the research this thesis is reporting. That is to say that the literature examined showed that issues of how teams form, what is necessary to make them come together and how their makeup is similar or different; what culture is that pervades an organisation and how that culture manifests itself; how much trust exists between the members of the team, how interpersonal trust can be grown and nurtured; and how power in an hierarchical organisation is exercised all will have a fundamental affect on the outcome of the research. However, what has not been addressed that is more fundamental than this is the nature of the world, what is real and how we can know those things, and how we value things affects our knowledge and experience of the world. Only from this might we understand how we could research some aspects of the nature of the world.

This Chapter will address the epistemological, ontological and axiological considerations pertinent to this research before examining the methodological approach taken through the lens of quantitative and qualitative research and their merits. It will look at how the formulation of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team fits the profile of action research (Revans, 1980) as well as that of participant observer (Bryman, 2004). It details the sources of data available to the research through the interviews with the Senior Leadership Team and the questionnaires

available before looking at the ethics of the research and the dilemmas facing action researchers. The chapter ends with the critical reflexivity that is necessary for participant-observer and action researchers.

4.1 Ontological, Epistemological and Axiological Considerations

The ontological, epistemological and axiological basis of any research underpins that research (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 61). That is to say that the basic questions about the nature of reality; how we know the world, that reality; and how we value those things must be laid out before the method of research can be detailed and, even if detailed, understood.

4.1.1 Epistemology

At its most basic, a platonic philosophy is simple. Nouns refer to objects. We understand what is meant by a table, a person, an orange and so forth as the objects are concrete and can be seen, touched, tasted, heard and smelt; they impinge on our senses. Others can test them with the same results. Abstract nouns refer to abstract objects; thoughts do not impinge on our senses but nevertheless are just as 'real' as concrete objects (Blackburn, 1999). This is not their chemical or electrical properties in our brains but as abstract objects. We can talk about and describe a concept, as it is an abstract object, in just the same way as we can a table, only it is impossible to measure and verify in the same way as a table. This then raises the epistemological question: how do we know about the concept? Having raised this question about the

abstract object, it reflects back to the concrete one. How do we know about the table? The fact that it impinges on our senses in some way could just be generated within our minds (Blackburn, 1999).

The external reality that scientists like to turn their attention to and 'discover' (Bryman, 2004: 12) lends itself to the Platonist viewpoint. It matters not that something that can be viewed and measured, a concrete object, is in one person's mind as long as experiments or observations are repeatable and the measurements made by others are the same. Whether or not we have an existential problem we can describe an existence that could (in theory) be verified by anybody (Blackburn, 1999, Schwartz, 1977, Ryle, 1975, Kenny, 1966).

The problem is more difficult with abstract objects. For a Platonist, a number is an abstract object that behaves in the way it does because of its inherent properties. Mathematics is the discovery of the external reality of the way that the abstract objects of mathematics behave. For some this concept is too abstruse to contemplate and another interpretation of mathematics is presented. Sometimes called Intuitionism (Dummett, 1977, Frege, 1974) this presents mathematics as a language that has certain rules. It does not describe any external reality it is just a set of symbols that can be manipulated in certain ways. Unfortunately, this concept of mathematics precludes the use of certain proofs, such as that the set of real numbers is larger than the set of all integers thus demonstrating that there is an infinity that is larger than infinity. To exclude this may seem like common sense, but that position in turn excludes large sections of mathematics used in modern electronics for example.

The conceptually more difficult 'Platonist' view of mathematics does not exclude these things. Thus there is considerable attraction to the Bryman (2004: 12) comment that there is an '*external reality to which scientists turn their attention.*' Again this seems to be a relatively natural conclusion to draw when dealing with the concrete objects of the natural sciences.

When dealing with the abstract objects that are the complex emotions and bonds that draw a senior leadership team together, the ever changing personal relationships by which the members of that team decide on their level of interpersonal trust, the notoriously difficult issue to define, let alone measure, of what is 'culture' in an organisation, and the ethereal notion of power, it is sometimes more difficult to conceive of these things as an external reality.

The positivist stance within the social sciences would advocate the application of the methods of the natural scientist to discover the external reality of social interaction (Bryman, 2004: 11). The realist position takes this stance a little further. For the realist in the social sciences, the methods of the natural sciences should be applied to the discovery of the external reality within the social sciences, but the critical realist would say that the scientist's conceptualisation is just one way of knowing that reality (Bryman, 2004). This allows the critical realist not only to allow for a difference between the objects they are trying to discover and the words used to describe them but also to bring in theoretical terms that cannot be directly observed, or '*generative mechanisms (Bhaskar, 1989)*' (Bryman, 2004: 12), as their effects can be observed.

The issue of unobservable objects is not an alien concept to the natural sciences as black holes, by their very nature, cannot be observed. Their incredibly high mass ensures that any means by which we might observe them is sucked into them and away from us; part of the definition of a black hole. Their presence can only be deduced by the observation of their effects. Of course, this courts controversy among natural scientists as to their existence. What if the observed effects were caused by some other phenomenon, or phenomena, that are observable but not yet discovered? We cannot, therefore, *know* of black holes we can only *believe* in them. We have thus arrived back at a similar problem to the existential conundrum that faced the philosopher.

The social sciences facing this problem adopted a position that is not unlike that of the Intuitionist mathematician, Interpretivism. Interpretivism is an alternative to positivism and looks at '*the subjective meaning of social action*' (Bryman, 2004: 13). Bryman goes on to say that

'the task of 'causal explanation' is undertaken with reference to the 'interpretive understanding of social action' rather than to external forces that have no meaning for those involved in that social action.'

The interpretation of social action seems a better way of dealing with the 'reasons' that a person does things, especially when attempting to understand the complex emotions and bonds that draw a senior leadership team together. The ever changing personal relationships by which the members of that team decide on their level of interpersonal trust, the notoriously difficult issue to define let alone measure

what is 'culture' in an organisation, and the ethereal notion of power. It is the interpretation that a social actor makes of their emotions and so forth that will make them act in the way that they did, whether or not that explanation is rational to any other observer. The observer is not looking for a compelling reason why the social actor acted in the way they did, only an explanation.

At this point it is easy to see that interpretivism is both subjective and empirical (in the sense of empirical deriving knowledge from experience alone. That is, just because the sun is observed to rise in the east every morning it is not proof that it will always do so. To prove that, a theory of planetary motion is needed.) It is subjective as interpretivism applies only to the specific social actor that is being observed. It is empirical as there is no proof that in the same circumstances that social actor will make the same interpretation and act in the same way, there is only the explanation that that is what has happened before. There is not necessarily an external reality causing that particular behaviour.

It may well be that a particular social actor can be observed in similar circumstances on several occasions and be seen to act in similar ways. It may be deduced from this that the social actor will act in that way when faced with similar circumstances in the future. It cannot, however, be **proved** that they will always do so as there is no demonstrated causal link to make them do so, only a statistical background that shows they are likely to act in that way. The interpretivist at this point has the explanation of the action but the positivist or realist lacks the proof.

At a philosophical level, this dichotomy can be taken further. Taking a realist's standpoint, if we knew all the circumstances, every tiny thing about a certain situation, then we would know why a particular person acted in 'that' way. Philosophically then, their behaviour is determined, it does not matter what so called choices they make as the outcome is determined by the external causes of their behaviour.

Reducto ad absurdum, the argument ends up as there is no point in being a sentient being as choice and decision are mere illusion; outcomes are already determined by the hard external causes of any one person's behaviour. The philosophical answer to this is the Sartrean one that a person always has choice, the choices made are one of the multiplicity of external causes that change circumstance and so affect outcomes for the one who made the choice (Sartre, 2003).

The question within the social sciences then becomes whether an observer of behaviour can know all the multiplicity of circumstance that makes a social actor act in such a way? Can experiments be so organised that all the variables can be reliably controlled so that the effect of each can be measured?

A realist stance would be to devise an experiment so that the variables are controlled but an interpretivist may argue that such results would have little validity in the so called 'real' world just because of the 'false' nature of the controls put in place. For example, many social science experiments are done with small control groups often made up of students studying on university courses – eg MBAs. They might be business persons but they are not in a business setting. They are in a simulated

setting. They know they are in a simulated setting (See for example Hsu, 1985). How would this relate to a 'real' setting? Would they still act in the same way?

Analysing these questions in the epistemological sense above, it seems that what is being asked is really whether the experimental conditions of the setting are anywhere comparable to the conditions that might apply in a non-experimental setting. Are the conditions of a simulated business setting sufficiently similar to a real one to be comparable? Does the experiment account for all the circumstances of a real setting? Can we know all the factors or circumstances that actually pertain in a real setting and thus compare with the experimental one? The list may go on.

Some would deny that such experiments can possibly be valid (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 56). While the experiment may provide perfectly valid behavioural results, it is also a perfectly logical argument that the complexity of a 'real' setting is such that we can only infer from the experimental results that people are *likely* to behave in that way in a real setting as the multiplicity of circumstances in the real setting are not catered for in the experimental one, in particular the subtle interaction between the circumstances rather than any binary effect each may have.

The converse of this argument is also true. The subtlety and complexity of a 'real' situation is such that inferences drawn from it may suffer from incorrect interpretation as an interpretivist's 'reason' for observed action may be false as other circumstances, unperceived, unperceivable, or just ignored may have greater influence on the action than those alleged to have done so. McSweeney's (2002) critique of Hofstede's (1980) model of national cultural differences is just such a case of

perceiving and explaining factors, circumstances and influences omitted from Hofstede's analysis. Both the realist and the interpretivist approach have limitations.

Considering the complexity of the situations, how much can be discovered or known about leaders of organisations in so called 'real' settings? Access to top teams in their actual settings for research is not easy (Bryman, 2004). To then demand that the settings are controlled to such an extent that sufficient is known of all variables to be able to gauge the effect of each would not make it any easier! Even if it were possible to do such a thing as discover, measure and control all the variables in a real setting for a top team in an organisation, the time taken to do it and the time that any interaction of any worth to the top team would take to be observed would stop senior leaders being able to participate, they would just not consider that amount of 'unproductive' time worth their while. They would consider that the loss of working time would seriously hamper their vital outputs.

Furthermore, such an experiment with so much control of circumstance would run the risk of not actually being representative of reality anyway – the very description by senior leaders of the time taken as 'unproductive' is indicative of this (see for example Jupp, 2007a: 182). The ability to access top leaders in real circumstances and the need to remain close to that reality dictate that research in this field must observe all that happens and make the best inferences possible while interfering as little as possible. That is, it will always be an empirical study, in the sense that observation of the past is the only indicator of the future, there is no proof of future behaviour. It will also be a subjective study. In this light, Interpretivism is the

best epistemological stance that can be taken, even if there is an inclination to belief in a Platonic world and a positivist discovery of it.

4.1.2 Ontology

Ontological considerations closely follow the epistemological ones. A positivist/realist epistemology requires that there is an objective reality that can be discovered. The ontological position of objectivism is just this. Within the social sciences, it asserts that '*social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actions*' (Bryman, 2004: 16) that can, therefore, be observed, measured and so known. The fact that these things cannot necessarily be observed and measured does not mean that they do not exist; vide the argument about black holes above.

Conversely, it can be imagined that the world does not operate in this way. Social phenomena could be put together by the social actors and continually constructed to suit their purposes. This position, called constructionism (Bryman, 2004: 17), allows the social phenomena to be constantly revised and negotiated between the social actors. The researcher's account of the social world is also a construction to which the term constructionism equally applies (Bryman, 2004: 17).

Within an interpretivist epistemology that is, at the least, forced by the practicality of the circumstances and our ability to observe them, the constructionist ontology is natural. We might be observing some external objective reality but we cannot know that we are. We can only make the best interpretation of the observations seen and so present a specific account of what is happening rather than a

definitive one. It will always be open to subsequent interpretation, especially if circumstances or influences come to light that have not been observed hitherto. Some would go further than this position of some compromise and say that as human relations are the main drivers of the science, constructionism is the only ontology that applies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002).

Observation of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team will, of necessity be interpretivist in its nature and though it could be indicative of an objective reality it is likely to be best perceived as a construction that is an optimum interpretation of the social phenomena that are observed. The axiological question then has to be asked. Is this knowledge valuable?

4.1.3 Axiology

From one perspective, this study is only an indication of an objective reality at best, which still leaves open the question of whether or not there is an objective reality. Given the difficulty outlined above in getting to the objective reality (if it exists) in the observation of senior leadership teams, then an indication of what it might be is valuable as it will help others glimpse the nature of the social phenomena that they may face if they too become part of, or try to form, a senior leadership team. If, on the other hand, the nature of what is observed is an exposition of the social phenomena that this particular senior leadership team constructed at this time and it is constantly being revised and reconstructed, what use may that knowledge be?

If the social phenomena that one particular senior leadership team constructed were helpful to that team, then it follows that those social phenomena **may** be helpful

to another team. Knowing how one team achieved that construction of social phenomena may help another also achieve a similar and equally helpful construction. Avoiding social constructions that may not be helpful is an equally useful application of the knowledge. The wisdom thus acquired is valuable for itself (Kvanvig, 1998).

It is true that there have been many studies of senior teams in various circumstances (See for example: Kakabadse, 1991, Wiersema and Bantel, 1992, Keck, 1997, Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008, Patzelt et al., 2008, Wageman et al., 2008, Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2009, Levrau and Berghe, 2009, Sheard et al., 2009). However, the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team is an extremely novel concept for the British military. Never before in the history of the Royal Air Force had such a concept been put into practice. No mention of such a military senior leadership team was found in the library searches in Cranfield, or Google Scholar, nor known of by the head of the Air Historical Branch. The novelty of the idea went against the grain of the traditional and enduring thinking on leadership within an armed force where decisiveness is welcomed and expected from leaders, and followers fall into line (Dowding, 1941, Jupp, 2007a: 182, Jupp, 2010b: 119). Furthermore, the only case within the air forces of NATO, other European countries, Australia, New Zealand and India of an entity like the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team is the Royal Australian Air Force Senior Leadership Team (Mugford and Rogers, 2005) upon which the Royal Air Force version was modelled though they developed slightly differently and function in their own way. The value of the knowledge gained from this study is, therefore, further enhanced by the uniqueness of the study.

As has already been noted in the literature review, there is a considerable body of knowledge on senior teams though little on the form of team that constitutes the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team. There is also already a considerable body of writing on trust, and within that the majority is not on interpersonal trust but on trust between organisations or between individuals and organisations. Again, none of it is on trust in the top echelons of a military organisation. Yet the military themselves, including the Royal Air Force, espouse trust up and down the command chain for the main philosophy of leadership, Mission Command, in the Armed Services to work (British Defence Doctrine, 2001, Bungay, 2005). If this research sheds light on trust as a concept at the zenith of the hierarchy of a military organisation and the utility of the type of team that is the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team, it will have proved its worth.

As Moore (1995) says, if the work identifies a class of problems and the things that would have to be considered if those problems were to be solved, and that the ideas presented allowed practitioners to distinguish better ideas from worse ones, and that the ideas when implemented actually served their purpose then value has been created. If the case study of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team demonstrates that a class of problems has been identified and practical ideas have been implemented that address those problems then value has been shown.

4.2

Quantitative and Qualitative Research

The distinction between quantitative and qualitative research has traditionally fallen symmetrically with quantitative research following an objectivist ontology and a positivist epistemology while qualitative research follows a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology (Bryman, 2004: 20). Quantitative research measures things to test theories and qualitative research deduces theories from an interpretation of what people say. However, the distinction is not always so clear cut. Qualitative research has been used to test theories and the approaches can be combined, while quantitative research has also backed an interpretivist stance (Bryman, 2004: 21 and Chap 22). Bryman also emphasises the practical considerations of the research being conducted. The research question may incline the researcher towards a quantitative or a qualitative method while the group of people being researched may not be amenable to a quantitative approach leaving the researcher with no option but to take a qualitative approach through the use of observation and interview.

The research into a senior leadership team touches on all these considerations. There is a considerable body of knowledge on senior teams in general (See for example Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2009, Levrau and Berghe, 2009, Sheard et al., 2009, Kakabadse, 1991, Wageman et al., 2008). These have almost exclusively been into commercial organisations and none have been into teams at the top of a military one. Furthermore, the type of senior leadership team within a military organisation that is examined by this research is very rare, at the time of the research, there was only one

other known example in the world of this type of military team – in the Royal Australian Air Force. The efficacy of such a team to a military force is therefore important knowledge for any such force.

The access to the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was privileged. Few external observers gain any access to open discussions between officers at the top of any military Service. As was demonstrated during the early meetings of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team, observers tended to constrain the discussions they had and make the members of the Team feel uncomfortable with having the free and open discussions that the Team was setup to make possible (Jupp, 2007a: 135, Jupp, 2008a: 63, 67).

Equally, any falsity to the workings of the meeting was resented as it was time perceived wasted in unproductive meetings (see for example Jupp, 2007a: 182). Any experimental work set up in constrained circumstances, either highly controlled ‘real’ ones or entirely false ones were not going to happen. Thus the method for research for this team was going to have to be a largely qualitative one through observation of a single observer.

The great advantage of a qualitative approach is that it allows for the great complexities of the leadership phenomenon in a real, open, work situation to be examined rather than an experimental or controlled, perhaps over-simplistic, situation created to examine the phenomenon in a quantitative way.

‘qualitative methods ... offer the leadership field several distinct advantages over quantitative methods: (1) more opportunities to explore leadership

phenomena in significant depth and to do so longitudinally; (2) the flexibility to discern and detect unexpected phenomena during the research; (3) an ability to investigate process more effectively; (4) greater chances to explore and to be sensitive to contextual factors; and (5) more effective means to investigate symbolic dimensions. It is critical, however, that whenever qualitative methods are employed, multiple methods need to be used. This is to ensure “between-method triangulation” of data’ (Conger and Toegel, 2002: 181).

Others make the point that the philosophical distinctions between the qualitative and quantitative methods of research are easy to distinguish and align with the epistemological and ontological arguments that support them as has been done at the beginning of this chapter. But in reality things are not so clear cut:

‘Although the distinctions between paradigms may be very clear at the philosophical level, as (Morgan, 1979) argue, when it comes to the choice of specific methods, and to issues of research design, the distinction breaks down. Increasingly, authors and researchers who work in organisations and with managers agree that one should attempt to mix methods to some extent, because it provides more perspectives on the phenomena being investigated’ (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002: 41).

Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 61) go further and claim that some researchers using the qualitative method remain aligned to a positive epistemology with an external reality that is discoverable by the scientific method, that the language used is

transparent and authoritative validation or development of theories of social reality can be made.

The clear philosophical arguments that provide seemingly easy, either/or, binary type, choices between two sides at both the epistemological and ontological levels are obviously deeply muddled when practical considerations have to be made. However, it remains true that observations of a real situation provide only empirical evidence. Only if that evidence provides incontrovertible proof of an external reality from which a logical inevitability of an action can be deduced can causality be claimed. That is, only if the observations prove that 'if x then y' can a universal theory be deduced.

However, as it is people that we are dealing with in the case of senior teams, this can only be stated as 'if x then person y will do z'. If you change the person, then you change the equation and the result is not necessarily true. Observations of a senior team can only show what that team will do in those circumstances. What may be inferred is only the likelihood of what another, *similar* team may do in the *same* circumstances, what the *same* team may do in *similar* circumstances and so forth.

Examination of the research question therefore not only indicates the value of the research in the light of these epistemological and ontological standpoints but also indicates the research methodology that is likely to be successful. Highly controlled experimental situations are not going to be possible to set up with such busy and important people. They do not have the time (and even if this were disputable they would not admit that they did and would not therefore allow them to be set up).

Qualitative methods are going to be the only ones readily available to the researcher by force of circumstance. However, this should not exclude the use of quantitative methods when the opportunity to use them presents itself as the use of more than one method allows for cross-method triangulation and some measure of corroboration of results (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, Alvesson and Deetz, 2000, Easterby-Smith et al., 2002, Herman and Egri, 2002, Roberts, 2002, Yates, 2004). Furthermore, some contend that quantitative methods alone are insufficient to capture the full and dynamic nature of leadership:

‘leadership as a phenomenon has certain attributes that are difficult to capture fully through quantitative methods – its dynamic character, its multiple levels, and its symbolic dimensions’ (Conger and Toegel, 2002: 176).

The nature of the study into the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team and the opportunities likely to be presented to make the study, dictate that the majority of the information gathered will be qualitative. Any opportunity to gather quantitative data and to triangulate the results should not be missed.

4.3 Research Method

The research method available to study the building of Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team and the generation of trust within it was to observe their meetings and on occasion to interview the members of it as individuals. This would indicate that the research was to be some form of ethnography as a ‘participant-observer’ (Bryman,

2004), being part of the team while observing and interviewing its members for the research. However, the researcher was in part the designer and facilitator of this team; very much involved in the work to bring them together and improve trust between the individuals. This militates against the form of research being that of the ethnographer as the researcher was to be intimately involved with the work of the team. This conception was more in line with the tradition of the Tavistock Institute (Susman and Evered, 1978) or that conceived by Lewin (1946). Indeed, Susman and Evered also note '*the deficiencies of positivist science for generating knowledge for solving problems that members of organizations face*' (1978: 583). Since the members of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team were also going to be gathering to examine and find solutions to their own 'real' problems, this research would follow the action learning philosophy of Revans (1980).

There are two main purposes for action research, first to contribute to new practices and second to contribute to new theory (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 45), these are both good axiological issues. The building of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was new practice. This form of team had not been used before by the Royal Air Force. It was also contentious at this top level of the Armed Services. Its novelty emphasises the worth of the study.

Action research, following on from Revans' (1980) work, has a circular or spiral form where the action plan goes from taking stock of what is going on, identifying a concern, thinking of a possible way forward, trying it out, monitoring the action to see what is happening, evaluating the progress, modifying the practice and moving in a

new direction (Susman and Evered, 1978: 588, Herr and Anderson, 2005: 23, McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 8,9).

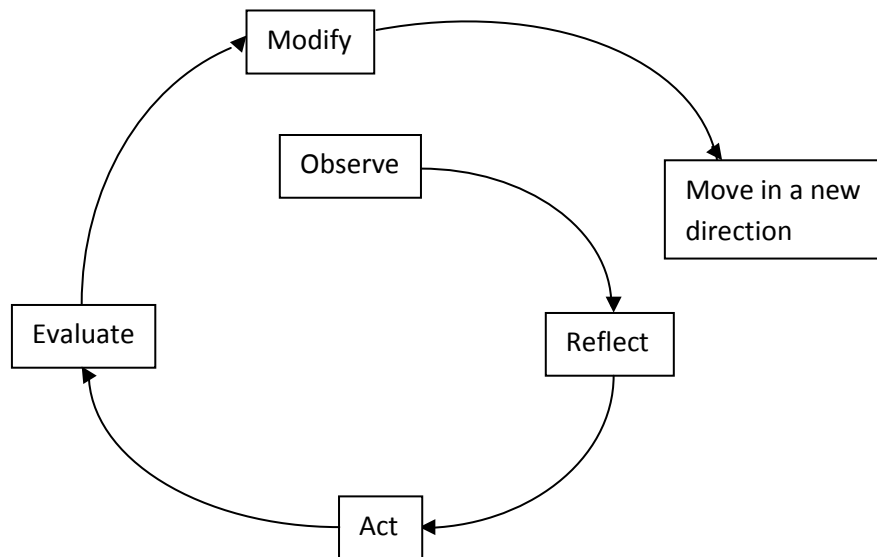


Figure 1 Action Learning Loop (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 9)

The meetings of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team were designed to follow this circular pattern not unlike Boyd's (2003) decision cycle of observe, orient, decide, act. The first meeting in February 2007 was designed to do some action learning (Revans, 1980) which itself was designed to allow 'safe' interaction between the members of the Team so that mutual respect and trust could build.

4.3.1 Design of the Senior Leadership Team Meetings

The first part of the first Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team meeting was to be briefs to the assembled air marshals on the challenges that the Royal Air Force faced, the context in which it was working and the direction that it was taking. The rest of the time would be for the workshop designed to build trust, this included some theoretical information on the importance of trust and how to build it (Wilkinson,

2006, Hurley, 2006) as well as a military example of the consequences of a lack of trust (Cox, 2007) before small group discussions on 'real-world' issues. The meeting was designed in this way to give time to the Chief of the Air Staff, the leader of the Team, and his Assistant Chief of the Air Staff to explain his vision and intent to his air marshals.

The first meeting ended with a decision to hold another meeting in June. This second meeting of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was designed a little differently, after reflection on the first meeting, so as to improve on the format used the first time around. A permanent external facilitator was engaged to work alongside the researcher. The facilitator also had experience of working with senior military teams but was from outside the organisation (and, being Australian, the country) to provide both impartiality and expertise. Both the agenda and the facilitation method were changed to improve on the first meeting.

The third meeting of the Team was three months later in September 2007 as the Team and its leader decided to increase the pace of events. The Senior Leadership Team was also now being used to help create the pace of change for the Royal Air Force Transformation Programme. The requirement for the frequency of meetings, at this stage, was being stated as five meetings a year. The overall format of the meeting remained the same and while the agenda concentrated on the Royal Air Force Transformation Programme, it was also still a full one with many items. Additionally, the meeting agreed that the Team should communicate better with the wider Royal Air Force.

At the Chief of the Air Staff's behest, though without his presence, the Senior Leadership Team met several times between the full meeting of the Team in September 2007 and the next full meeting of the Team that December to debate and take forward the Royal Air Force Transformation Programme. These meetings were to start with a reaffirmation of the Senior Leadership Team code of practice (Torpy, 2007) as a reminder that, though they were not full meetings of the Team, they were nevertheless meetings where the Team was supposed to perform.

Partly because of the number of Royal Air Force Transformation meetings and partly because of pressure of other work, the intended meeting for December 2007 was cancelled. Instead, all the members of the Senior Leadership Team were interviewed by the researcher in preparation for a series of visits by members of the Team to a large number of Royal Air Force Stations to meet the wider communication remit. These interviews were to keep the momentum of the Senior Leadership Team and to explain the format of the Station visits while preparing the Team members for active listening (Consortium, 1998, Tools, 1995-2010) during the visits.

4.3.2 Wider Communication of the Team

To fulfil the remit decided upon in September 2007 for a wider communication effort, a series of visits to Royal Air Force Stations for groups of three Team members were arranged. The visits were prepared and facilitated in a different manner to traditional visits to Stations by air marshals.

The February 2008 meeting again had a busy agenda of topics the Chief of the Air Staff wanted to be discussed by the Team including matters of the moment from

the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff and the discussion of the station visits which was also fed forward into the Chief of the Air Staff's Conference for Air Officers and Station Commanders, which followed on immediately after the Senior Leadership Team meeting. Out of this process, a unified message was crafted for the members of the Senior Leadership Team to take back to the stations that they had just visited.

4.3.3 Development of Team Meetings

After those members of the Team that needed to return to the stations that they had visited had done so, a further meeting of the Team was held in April 2008. This time the meeting was held at a location external to the Royal Air Force as a further method of inducing freedom of expression and thinking 'outside the box'. Additionally, the number of external observers of the Senior Leadership Team meetings was reduced to a minimum to increase the feeling of safety that the Team members would have to speak their minds (Jupp, 2008a: 151).

The agenda for this meeting was de-scoped to include just three elements, a 'matters of the moment' brief from the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff, a topic of discussion of the Chief of the Air Staff's choice and learning session to improve the Team's communication skills so that important agenda items were not cut short.

A planned meeting in June 2008 was cancelled due to the Chief of the Air Staff's pressure of work and also because the Team decided that they needed 'upskilling' (their word (Jupp, 2008a: 187)) in leadership areas. To fulfil this requirement, a Defence Executive Leadership Programme was laid on at the Defence Leadership and Management Centre at the Defence Academy, Shrivenham. This two-day course was

to be attended by all those Senior Leadership Team members who had not already done a leadership course at the Defence Leadership and Management Centre.

The next meeting of the Senior Leadership Team took place at another location external to the Royal Air Force in September 2008. The agenda was again a fuller one to pander to the feeling of the majority of the Team that they needed a 'meaty' agenda to justify their time (Jupp, 2009a: 66). Once more the emphasis was made on having as few observers in the meeting as possible.

The year finished with a final Senior Leadership Team meeting in early December. This meeting's format was slightly different from those going before it. The meeting was held at the same Royal Air Force Station as a conference requiring the presence of many of the Team. This time the agenda was cut to a single, very important item as the full agenda of September had precluded discussions coming to a reasonable conclusion (Jupp, 2009a: 83, 84).

4.3.4 Refinement of Meetings

It was agreed that having attempted five meetings in 2008, for which there had initially been an appetite, there would now be four meetings per year and a more consistent structure would be put into the 2009 meetings (Jupp, 2009a: 85). In the light of the February 2009 meeting, the June meeting was modified to again have a single, most important topic.

The September 2009 meeting, the first with the new Chief of the Air Staff, was to have a completely different format. Not only would it be the first with the new

Chief of the Air Staff, a new leader for the Team, but also nearly half of the Team would have changed over from the beginning of the year (Ross, 2009). The new leader wanted to run a Staff Ride with his Team over three days and to take them completely away for that time. The Staff Ride is a military format, adapted by the Royal Air Force, where the group visit former battlefields to learn how the leaders of that time dealt with the situations they faced at the strategic, operational and tactical level and then discuss what lessons they may learn from this insight for the situations pertaining today and in the future.

The final meeting of 2009 was held in the more usual format at a Royal Air Force station over two days with an informal dinner. The agenda reverted to the three issues that had been discussed at the beginning of the year: a Team behavioural discussion, a major topic of the moment from the Chief of the Air Staff and a 'matters of the moment' brief from the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff.

As can be seen from this sequence of events, the formats of the meetings follow the spiral process of action research closely. The action plan for the meetings went from taking stock of what happened at the meeting, identifying a concern, thinking of a possible way forward, trying it out at the next meeting, monitoring the action to see what was happening, evaluating the progress, modifying the practice at the next meeting and moving in a new direction (Susman and Evered, 1978: 588, Herr and Anderson, 2005: 23, McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 8,9).

4.4

Ethics of the Research

The ethics of this research were considered during the design of the research and reviewed by the PhD Committee to comply with the Economic and Social Research Council Framework for Research Ethics. The participants in the research were all informed at interview about the purpose, methods and intended uses of the research and signed consent forms for the use of their material which included the option of withdrawing from the research at any time. The confidentiality of the participants was adhered to with no participant being named and quotes assigned, at their most specific, to a 'lettered' member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Despite occasional pressure being brought to bear on the researcher to divulge information on individual participants to more senior officers, this pressure was resisted and other ways found to provide sufficient information for the workings of the organisation. Within this conundrum, it is recognised that the researcher had conflicts of interest both as a member of the Royal Air Force, and so a subordinate to all the members of the Senior Leadership Team, but also in the outcomes of the research. Throughout the research and the thesis, these conflicts of interest were borne in mind. The addition of an external facilitator early on in the life of the Team helped during the research and the critical reflexivity (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006) built into the thesis was designed to address that conflict of interest. More detail on this is in the section on Action Research Dilemmas and Validity.

The research and thesis met the ethical codes of the University and, though the Ministry of Defence publication was published after the start of the research, the

principles of that document were adhered to. As there was ethical oversight as a matter of course (MoDREC, 2010: para 8, sub para g) through the University, the research was not retrospectively submitted to the Committee.

4.5 Interviews with Senior Leadership Team Members

In addition to the evidence gathered from observation of the meetings of the Senior Leadership Team, the opportunity was taken to interview the members of the Senior Leadership Team on two occasions. The first occasion, as mentioned above, arose at the end of 2007 when it became necessary to ensure the members of the Senior Leadership Team were ready to play their part in the sequence of Royal Air Force station visits as part of the Team's engagement process with the rank and file of the organisation. This first interview was structured around educating the members of the Team in active listening (Consortium, 1998, Tools, 1995-2010) but the researcher discovered that the members were also wanting to talk about their attitude to and feelings about the Senior Leadership Team. These interviews were not recorded on tape, though notes were made of them during and after the interview (Jupp, 2008a).

One year later, the Chief of the Air Staff and the researcher agreed that it would be a good idea to repeat the interviews of the Team to gauge the feelings of the members and to find what it was that they really wanted to discuss in the meetings. This followed the meeting in September 2008 when there had been a concerted effort by a core of the members to change the agenda to something they felt a more appropriate use of their time (Jupp, 2009a: 85). These were semi-structured

interviews (Fontana and Frey, 1994, Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) where the same questions were asked to all interviewees but the direction that the interviewee took the question was not constrained. The majority of the interviews were recorded but where the recording device failed, notes alone, which were taken in all the interviews, were used. The questions used for these interviews are reproduced in Appendix B.

The recordings of the interviews were transcribed by audio-typists who did not know the identity of the interviewees thus eliminating any bias there might have been in the transcription while maintaining their anonymity. The transcriptions, notes of the un-recorded interviews and notes of the observation of the Senior Leadership Team meetings were read, reflected upon and re-read looking for themes and issues.

At all times, the researcher was conscious of the risk of bias colouring the themes and issues that were found. In order to counter this problem, every theme or issue that arose was thought through to find its counterpart by asking the question “If I was biased, what would I be ignoring?” Once the counterpart theme or issue was expressed, the qualitative data was searched to find it. Wherever possible, each theme or issue and its counterpart was triangulated in the quantitative data available to the researcher from questionnaires.

4.6 Questionnaire Data Available to the Research

The Royal Air Force Transformation initiative decided to use a survey to gauge the effect of their work. The Senior Leadership Team researcher with a member of the Royal Air Force Transformation Team and a Royal Air Force psychologist designed a

questionnaire for this work. This questionnaire asked the Senior Leadership Team to score themselves as a team against various criteria and also asked a random selection of officers from the three ranks below the Senior Leadership Team: wing commander, group captain and air commodore, to score the Team as a team against the same criteria. Three annual iterations of this survey, 2007, 2008, and 2009 were also available to the researcher. Slight alterations to the questionnaire were made in 2009 which dropped one question and replaced it with a direct question on how well the Senior Leadership Team trusted one another. The full data tables are reproduced below in Tables 1 and 2 for completeness. The relevant data is used in Chapter 5 in graphical form derived from these tables.

Question	Mean score (SLT)	Mean score (OF5s/1*s)²	Agreement (SLT)	Agreement (OF5s/1*s)
Q1 ... values the contribution of individual RAF personnel	4.4	3.8	95.90%	78.30%
Q6 ... takes on board the views of junior personnel	3.5	3.1	58.40%	37.10%
Q11 ... openly communicates outside the team	3.5	2.7	62.50%	25.50%
Q15 ... has an appropriate leadership style	3.7	3.1	66.70%	36.70%
Q2 ... respects each other's contribution	3.6	3.1	58.30%	34.10%
Q10 ... openly communicates inside the team	3.7	3.2	70.80%	34.50%
Q12 ... works as a team	3.5	2.6	37.50%	15.10%
Q13 ... has the right professional mix	3.6	2.9	62.50%	31.70%
Q14 ... is honest with each other	3.6	2.8	62.50%	16.70%
Q16 ... trust each other	3.4	2.6	58.30%	7.70%
Q17 ... cooperates with each other	3.6	2.7	66.70%	18.40%
Q3 ... has a common purpose	3.4	3.1	50.00%	34.40%
Q4 ... has a clear purpose	3.3	3.0	45.80%	34.70%
Q5 ... has drive and commitment	3.6	3.7	54.20%	71.00%
Q7 ... is accountable for its decisions	2.9	2.8	29.20%	30.10%
Q8 ... is innovative and flexible	3.2	2.6	29.20%	18.20%

² OF5 is the NATO designation of a group captain, 1* of an air commodore.

Q9 ... manages change appropriately	3.0	2.6	37.50%	17.50%
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Table 1: SLT and OF5/1* (2009) Comparison Scores (Elliott-Mabey, 2009: A-3)

Question ³	Mean score (2009)	Mean score (2008)	Mean score (2007)	Agreement (2009)	Agreement (2008)	Agreement (2007)
Q1 ... values the contribution of individual RAF personnel	4.4	4.4	4.1	95.90%	100.0%	86.0%
Q6 ... takes on board the views of junior personnel	3.5	3.6	3.1	58.40%	63.6%	32.0%
Q11 ... openly communicates outside the team	3.5	3.5	2.6	62.50%	59.0%	18.0%
Q15 ... has an appropriate leadership style	3.7	N/A	N/A	66.70%	N/A	N/A
Q2 ... respects each other's contribution	3.6	3.7	3.5	58.30%	72.7%	68.0%
Q10 ... openly communicates inside the team	3.7	3.6	2.8	70.80%	63.6%	39.0%
Q12 ... works as a team	3.5	3.7	2.8	37.50%	68.1%	21.0%
Q13 ... has the right professional mix	3.6	3.9	3.7	62.50%	81.8%	79.0%
Q14 ... is honest with each other	3.6	3.7	3.3	62.50%	72.7%	54.0%
Q16 ... trust each other	3.4	N/A	N/A	58.30%	N/A	N/A
Q17 ... cooperates with each other	3.6	N/A	N/A	66.70%	N/A	N/A
Q3 ... has a common purpose	3.4	3.6	3.2	50.00%	63.6%	50.0%
Q4 ... has a clear purpose	3.3	3.7	3.2	45.80%	63.6%	39.0%
Q5 ... has drive and commitment	3.6	3.7	3.9	54.20%	72.7%	86.0%
Q7 ... is accountable for its decisions	2.9	2.9	2.8	29.20%	25.0%	25.0%
... delivers	N/A	2.9	3.2	N/A	18.2%	46.0%
Q8 ... is innovative and flexible	3.2	3.5	3.0	29.20%	50.0%	29.0%
Q9 ... manages change appropriately	3.0	3.0	2.8	37.50%	22.7%	18.0%

Table 2 SLT Comparisons from 2009, 2008, 2007 (Elliott-Mabey, 2009: A-4)

³ Question numbers reflect the 09 survey version – 3 new items were added since 08, and one item was removed.

This quantitative data was used in the analysis to support or critique the analysis of the qualitative data from the observations and interviews of the Senior Leadership Team.

4.7 Action Research Dilemmas and Validity

To complete the research methodology, it remains to examine both the dilemmas of action research and the validity of it. Validity is an indication of the research actually '*observing, identifying, or "measuring" what you say you are*' (Bryman, 2004: 273), while reliability is the extent to which observers agree about what they see and hear as well as whether the research can be replicated (Bryman, 2004: 273). Bryman goes on to question whether these terms, derived from quantitative research, are applicable to qualitative research and indicates how others have adopted different but parallel criteria for the latter.

Herr and Anderson (2005: 55) set out five goals for action research:

1. The generation of knowledge,
2. The achievement of action-oriented outcomes,
3. The education of both the researcher and the participants,
4. Results that are relevant to the local setting,
5. A sound and appropriate research methodology.

To these they assign in order five quality or validity criteria:

1. Dialogic and process validity,
2. Outcome validity,

3. Catalytic validity,
4. Democratic validity and
5. Process validity.

This research will adopt the validity criteria of Herr and Anderson. The reliability of the research rests on the cross method triangulation with the use of observation, interview and questionnaire laid out above (Conger and Toegel, 2002, Easterby-Smith et al., 2002, Herman and Egri, 2002). It is also supported by the reflexivity built into the research.

The purpose of this research flows from the research question: What are the conditions required to establish an egalitarian team in a military hierarchy? As it is a blend of action research and participant-observer research it has an action-oriented outcome in the building of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team where all ideas and opinions are equal and welcomed. The research also looks at how this new culture can be sustained in the strict hierarchy that is the Royal Air Force examining the effects of power, building trust and culture.

Additionally, it has the goal of educating the members of the Team as laid out in the description of the meetings of the Team above. The epistemological and ontological basis for the research already discussed in this chapter leans the research towards the local setting. As a construction of this Team for the circumstances of the Royal Air Force it is applicable to the Royal Air Force. Though it is true to say that it may have a bearing on any senior team that is of a similar size and purpose to the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team.

The process used, described above, is that of the accepted method of action research (Herr and Anderson, 2005, Susman and Evered, 1978, McNiff and Whitehead, 2006) following the spiral of action, taking stock of what happened at the meeting, identifying a concern, thinking of a possible way forward, trying it out at the next meeting, monitoring the action to see what was happening, evaluating the progress, modifying the practice at the next meeting and moving in a new direction. The process involved the dialogue of the participants to resolve real world problems required by good action learning (Revans, 1980) as well as the dialogue between the researcher, the external facilitator and the Chief of the Air Staff, the leader of the Team, (see for example: Jupp, 2007a, Jupp, 2008a) to ensure that the process was kept along the lines required by the leader of the Team.

The outcome validity, *'the extent to which outcomes occur, which leads to the resolution of the problem[s]'* (Herr and Anderson, 2005: 55) will be seen from the examination of the results of the meetings, interviews and questionnaires that will be laid out in the next chapter. The democratic validity, the extent to which the outcomes of the initiative to set up the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team are relevant or worthwhile to the leader and members of the Team, are also a function of the outcomes of the meetings and process of the Team rather than in the methodology. Hence they too will become apparent in the description of the results of the process in the next chapter.

The catalytic validity of the research is *'the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses and energises the participants toward knowing reality in*

order to transform it (Lather, 1986: 272)' (Herr and Anderson, 2005: 55). The catalytic validity can only be judged, therefore, by an examination of how the process of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team affected the members of the Team, including the leader of the Team, the Chief of the Air Staff, and enabled them to understand and transform the reality they faced. Only a detailed examination of the results of the meetings could indicate the catalytic validity of the research.

The catalytic validity of the education of the researcher is inextricably bound to the ethical dilemmas of action research. The researcher's emotional attachment to, and central position in, both the action and the research inevitably impinge on any description of the education achieved by the researcher. It is therefore imperative that there is a close examination of the dilemmas of action research for this reason alone.

4.7.1 Dilemmas of Action Research

Rapoport (1970) names three dilemmas facing the action researcher; ethical, goal and initiatives. For him the ethical dilemmas are to ensure that the work is done in a value framework that is acceptable to both the researcher and the organisation in which the research is being done. The principle of confidentiality and the protection of the respondents must be adhered to, and the researcher must not become a 'captive' of one organisation.

The goal dilemmas centre on the degree of detachment of the researcher to ensure valid scientific results and the degree of involvement necessary to generate action within the organisation. The initiatives dilemma is concerned with the degree

of recognition by the organisation of the worth of the initiatives started by the researcher to resolve the problem as perceived by the organisation in the first place. Here Rapoport acknowledges that as the action research evolves, there is likely to be a change of perspective needed by the organisation as to what the problem really is as opposed to that which was originally presented. The organisation may reject this reorientation.

For this research, the researcher is a member of the same organisation as the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team and therefore was working within the same value framework. The researcher's notes and the interview transcripts were only seen by the researcher and any reported speech not attributed. Within the bounds that is a relatively small number of people (even if a large team) confidentiality was preserved, and interviewees were all asked for their permission to use the interview material for the research. At times there was a considerable pressure on the researcher to reveal to the Chief of the Air Staff names of individuals; however, the working relationship between the researcher and the Chief of the Air Staff maintained this not to be the case. In one instance, just before the first meeting of the Team, a separate person with knowledge from a different source was used to preserve the working relationship (Jupp, 2004b).

In one sense, the researcher was already a 'captive' of the organisation as he was already a member of the organisation. This would certainly raise the ethical issue of bias towards the organisation raised by Rapoport. To counter this the research will build in a critical reflexivity to examine these perspectives (Herr and Anderson,

2005, McNiff and Whitehead, 2006) in the next section of this chapter and throughout the chapter on the analysis of the meetings, interviews and questionnaires.

The other part of the 'captive dilemma' is the disadvantaging of the organisation by the researcher passing on information that would assist rivals. In this case, the problems being dealt with are '*generic societal*' and team problems (Rapoport, 1970: 505) of wider interest than a specific organisation and unlikely to directly affect competitiveness. Additionally, since the organisation is a public service, the results are likely to be in the National interest more in line with the original Tavistock Institute research (Rapoport, 1970: 503).

The goal dilemma of balancing the degree of involvement to create the necessary action and the degree of detachment to gather scientific knowledge is very much akin to the 'captive dilemma'. The critical reflexivity built into the research is as vital to resolve the goal dilemma as to deal with the ethical one. As Rapoport puts it balancing

'the practical affairs of man and the intellectual interest of the social science community... [is] a matter for the special art of the action researcher'.

(Rapoport, 1970: 511)

Part of that art is the critical reflexivity built into the research.

The objectiveness of any researcher, qualitative or quantitative, is always open to doubt. Observations made of any subject are usually made to fit the prevalent theory, sometimes the theory altered inappropriately to fit the observations (Kuhn,

1970). Kuhn uses the example of epicycles added to the theoretical circular motion of the planets round the sun to cope with the observed movements of the planet that were out of kilter with the predicted movements that should have been there from the original Copernican theory. It took the very great mind of Newton to change the theory completely to one of elliptical movement. The point being that all researchers are prone to bias of one sort or another. Within research into leadership it is easy to attribute things to the leader that the leader had no chance of influencing, sometimes called fundamental attribution error (Popper, 2002). It is also easy to assume others are natural leaders simply because they have always been at the centre of things, symbolic attribution bias (Popper, 2002). Popper goes on to claim that treating:

'leadership as relationship embraces the components of the leadership phenomenon: leaders, followers, and the context in which these relationships are formed, and thus gives more expression to the complexity of leadership, avoiding the inherent biases above' (Popper, 2002:12)

Treating the leadership issues within the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team as a relationship and embracing the complexity of them should militate against various forms of bias.

Returning to Rapoport's three dilemmas of action research mentioned above, the third, the rejection of initiatives, is a big problem for the lone researcher as he points out (Rapoport, 1970: 509). The measures he took to alleviate the problem included greater feedback of information and, most importantly, collaboration with a colleague. In the case of this research, the addition of a second, external, facilitator

greatly assisted the feedback of information and assisted with role change. As the second facilitator was independent of the organisation and had experience of facilitating military senior leadership teams, the information fed back was also more readily accepted by most of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team.

4.8 Critical Reflexivity

The final section of this chapter on methodology is the start of the reflexivity that must be built into action research (Herr and Anderson, 2005, McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). Here the motives and desires of the researcher will be examined which will complement the active search in Chapter 5 on the analysis of the data for the counterpart to the themes or issues that surface.

As has been stated above the researcher is a member of the same organisation as that of the research subject. Furthermore, the researcher was the Officer Commanding the Royal Air Force Leadership Centre and the building of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was fundamental to the strategy he put in place to improve leadership throughout the Royal Air Force.

Building trust across the top of the organisation, ie within the Senior Leadership Team, was one of the foundations upon which trust up and down the command chains was to be built to allow Mission Command to become an everyday working practice, one of the four objectives of the Royal Air Force Leadership Centre. Thus the success of building the Senior Leadership Team and improving trust between its members was

intimately connected to the work goals of the researcher providing considerable incentive to be seen to succeed. A high self awareness of this fact and a critical reflection on the feelings of the researcher at the start of the research, during the examination of the findings of the research, and at the end of the process is the only guard against this bias.

As the start of that reflexivity, the following extract is included from a personal communication of the researcher:

'I would be a fool, though, not to acknowledge that my own personal reputation within the Service was also riding on the result that I could achieve. This is the more so as, unusually for a serving officer, I had negotiated a five-year term in the post so as to try to affect behavioural change. A more usual two-year tenure would have allowed me the normal 'political' route of claiming success and blaming any failings on my successor.

So what, then, is my position in all this? To start to answer this question, I have to think of my overall career in the Royal Air Force. I have been serving for nearly thirty years in many roles on the operational side of the Service and have had a fulfilling career in many different ways. Many would say that I have been quite successful in achieving the rank that I have done (the only measure of success within the armed services). I am now near to the mandatory retirement age of Service personnel and am unlikely, in my own mind, to be promoted further.

This would seem to mean that I could be closer to Collins' altruistic ambition than not, as I will not be advanced by achieving success here. However, just because I am seen, and see myself, as a reasonably successful person, I would be very disappointed if the experiment were to fail or if I were seen by others to have failed. I have put a lot of effort into starting the project and keeping it going so far. I am part of it, the effort though not the Team, and it is a large part of my work. All people like to be part of a successful enterprise.

But this works both ways, if Practitioner Action Research is done by any insider, that person must guard against the 'rose tinted spectacles' that all people within an organisation tend to wear. However, if it is not possible for me to be sufficiently objective about this research, then it should not be possible for any other insider. I infer from this that I can be objective but must be constantly vigilant. In short, I must be wary of too optimistic a view of outcomes and data.' (Jupp, 2008b)

The efficacy of this awareness of the tendency towards bias will be played out in the next chapter on the outcomes and results of the research. It remains here to add a further piece from the researcher that was written at the end of the research to add to the remarks above to conclude on the feelings, and awareness of those feelings:

'Time has moved on from the positions at the start of this research with the date now 3 January 2013. I am no longer a full serving member of the Royal Air Force and have no promotion prospects within it. I am a part-time member of

the Reserve Forces as it is through that medium that I still deliver the work wanted by the Royal Air Force in delivering senior leadership interventions – the Senior Leadership Team and the Strategic Leadership Development Programme – on a fixed contract through until March 2014. Where does that leave me with regards to the bias issues in this research?

The Senior Leadership Team still meets at the frequency of about three times per year dependant on the Chief of the Air Staff's wish. The Chief of the Air Staff is about to change again, most likely in the summer of 2013 but the new Chief is not yet known and so neither are his wishes for the Senior Leadership Team. My tenure of facilitator at it is therefore also not known. My contract is unlikely to be renewed in 2014 anyway as the Service is still saving money wherever it can to meet new public spending constraints unforeseen in 2008. As I have a fledgling career outside the Royal Air Force started in the other part of my time, this does not worry me.

The note I made in 2008 still holds true though, I would not want to be associated with failure. The question remains though as to whether if the Senior Leadership Team stopped meeting, would that be failure? I would argue not. We are fast approaching the sixth anniversary of the Team and it seems to have met many of its objectives. If the new Chief decides that the Team is not how he wishes to operate then the Team will not exist but I feel that those who are part of it at least understand what it is and why it was done. But I am aware that this last statement is the bias that I am reflecting upon and that this

is how I will have examined the data. It is all the more important, then, that I searched diligently for the opposites of the trends and themes that I found. This I believe that I have done.

4.9

Conclusion

In summary for this chapter, action research into the complex and ever changing issues of the social relationships and culture within a senior team is largely qualitative research because of the restrictions that will always be applied to access to such teams in a real work situation, even though every opportunity may be taken to achieve some triangulation with quantitative methods such as questionnaires. Additionally, the very complexity of the situations observed will also have to be interpreted by the researcher.

It is probably not possible to control the situations so that external realities can be uncovered. Even if it were, the time pressures on real senior teams in real live situations are such that they would not allow their situations to be controlled to such an extent as it would mean further encroachments on their time, something they cannot afford. Therefore, the epistemology cannot be positivist or Platonist and has to be interpretivist.

Using Interpretivism as the epistemology, it is logical to have a constructivist ontology. Without answering the question whether there is an external reality to be uncovered, the researcher has to make constructions of the things he or she sees

before them. Their interpretation and construction of the social phenomena they observe. Some would say that with human relations the main drivers of social science, constructionism is the only ontology that applies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). A constructivist ontology and qualitative methods of research can still be used to test or develop theories (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000).

The worth of the research is bound up in its benefit to the Royal Air Force as well as the overall body of knowledge (Roberts, 2002). While there has been considerable writing on the functioning of top teams, most of this has been on teams restricted in size and also to teams that are expected to make the crucial decisions (See for example: Sheard et al., 2009), little has been written about larger teams that do not make decisions (Wageman et al., 2008) and even less on top military teams of this sort which are themselves very unusual. The research will, therefore, add to the body of knowledge and be of benefit to the organisation in which it was done as it will have identified problems, sorted practically useful ideas from the worse ones and demonstrated their implementation (Moore, 1995).

The research was done principally by observation and interview over a period in excess of three years and is, therefore, not unlike an ethnographic study. However, the researcher was a member of the organisation in which the research was done and also played a key role in the working of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team. The research was thus both participant observer and action research following in the tradition of the Tavistock Institute and Lewin (Rapoport, 1970, Lewin, 1946) and followed the spiral of action research taking stock of what is going on at each meeting,

identifying a concern, thinking of a possible way forward, trying it out, monitoring the action to see what is happening, evaluating the progress, modifying the practice and moving in a new direction (Susman and Evered, 1978: 588, Herr and Anderson, 2005: 23, McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 8,9).

This observational data was complemented by two sets of interviews with the members of the Senior Leadership Team and by a questionnaire dealing specifically with the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team initiated by the Royal Air Force Transformation Team.

The validity criteria used are those set out by Herr and Anderson (2005) to match the goals of action research of:

1. The generation of knowledge,
2. The achievement of action-oriented outcomes,
3. The education of both the researcher and the participants,
4. Results that are relevant to the local setting,
5. A sound and appropriate research methodology.

To these they assign in order five quality or validity criteria:

1. Dialogic and process validity,
2. Outcome validity,
3. Catalytic validity,
4. Democratic validity and
5. Process validity.

The process used is a recognised valid action research process and the outcome, catalytic and democratic validity will be tested against the results found at the end of the next chapter discussing the outcomes of the meetings, interviews and questionnaires.

The ethics of the research were considered in its design phase and complied with the Economic and Social Research Council Framework and the Ministry of Defence publication. The anonymity of the members of the Team was preserved as far as was possible in a small select group as well as the goal and initiative dilemmas (Rapoport, 1970) dealt with. The bias of the researcher is countered by the reflexivity built into the research reporting.

Chapter 5

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA: THE MEETINGS, INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

5.1 Introduction

The literature review started with the premise that the four areas of: forming teams, the effect of power, changing and maintaining a different culture within a hierarchy, and interpersonal trust needed to be examined to answer the research question posed by this thesis. Wageman et al's (2008) 5-point model of how to form a large senior leadership team was chosen to examine as the closest model to that of the case to study:

- need for a team;
- clear purpose;
- right composition;
- right structure, support and coaching;
- leadership.

Particular attention was to be made with the third criterion of what the right composition should be for a large consultative and informational team. Scrutiny was also to be given to whether facilitation could deal with the problem of fewer members participating as the size of the team grew and with the poor behaviours that might be imported to a large team. The effects of power within the team were to be examined and whether leadership and facilitation could ameliorate them.

The case study was to look at whether a new, less hierarchical culture could be induced and maintained in the team. The criteria for this were indicated to be:

- a well formed team,
- leadership,
- great trust,
- a compelling reason for a different culture

From Chapter 4 on methodology the research material available for the case study was principally the notes taken of the meetings of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team, two sets of interview data and survey data from the Senior Leadership Team Questionnaire used for Royal Air Force Transformation purposes. Using this data, this chapter aims to analyse the Senior Leadership Team against the 5 criteria of the model above and the additional factors of changing and maintaining a culture in the Team, the effects of power and building trust. These factors were derived from the literature review to decide whether they are the necessary and sufficient conditions to create and sustain a team within a hierarchy that has a different, flatter culture. However, before commencing the analysis of the conceptual model proposed from the literature review, the sequence of meetings of the Senior Leadership Team is laid out as seen by the participant-observer.

5.1.1 Meetings of the Senior Leadership Team

As was explained in Chapter 1, the first meeting of what was to become the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team came about for a number of reasons. Principally these were for the Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Glenn Torpy, to bring together all his air marshals and harness their collective experience and intellect as well as to deal with the lack of trust and bad behaviour between them. The agenda for this meeting was split into two halves. The first half was the responsibility of Sir Glenn Torpy and consisted of briefings from him and his deputy about what was happening at the strategic level of Defence and where he, the Chief of the Air Staff, intended to take the Royal Air Force. It continued with briefs on how to build trust (Wilkinson, 2006, Hurley, 2006), and the consequences of a lack of trust (Cox, 2007), before finishing with a workshop designed to build trust between the air marshals .

The agenda was designed to give the air marshals a strong reason to be at the meeting in order to hear from their Chief in a more intimate setting than had ever been available to them before. In other words to ensure that the meeting felt important enough for them to attend it (Wageman et al., 2008) as well as for the ostensible purpose of allowing Sir Glenn Torpy to explain his intent. This in turn was to ensure that the maximum number of air marshals attended the meeting so that the maximum number was at the second part designed to deal with the trust issue. Both parts were designed to help in the building of the Team itself; the first giving a clear and important purpose for the Team, and the second to allow those who had not

worked together before, or who knew little of each other, to work more closely together.

The meeting was held over a 24 hour period from lunchtime one day to lunchtime the next so that there was a chance for the air marshals to socialise together in an informal setting, allowing further networking and a greater chance to get to know each other better, especially over dinner where an external speaker was also brought in. The small group discussions were held using the Exeter Friendly Consulting method (Gosling, 2006) where one person presents a problem to the group then listens to their discussion of the problem but does not take part in that discussion. External consultants were used to ensure the safest atmosphere for the air marshals to discuss matters as freely as possible.

The small groups were used to ensure that all present had the best chance of contributing to the discussions rather than a small number of them dominating discussions which tends to happen in larger groups – the group size paradox (Esteban and Ray, 2001, Hsu, 1985, Davison, 2001). Lastly, the groups were carefully composed to break up any formal or informal power lines; ie as far as possible commanders were not put with their direct reports nor the ‘right hand man’ that they relied upon. The intention to this being that discussions were as genuine as possible without opinions being biased by any sycophantic agreements with those in a position of power.

Before the meeting no decision had been taken about the form of future meetings or, indeed, whether there would be any further meetings. Despite declaring humorously at the start of the second half of the meeting that what was about to

happen was all the fault of the Head of the Leadership Centre; by the end of the meeting Sir Glenn Torpy stated to all the assembled air marshals that he liked working in the way that had been designed and that he would continue to do so (Jupp, 2004b). The next meeting of the air marshals was set for June 2007, some three months later.

The new, external facilitator helped to design the June meeting where the world cafe method (Brown and Isaacs, 2005) was used. The world cafe facilitation method allowed all the Senior Leadership Team to remain in the same room while having small group discussions of various issues round the 'cafe-style' tables. Furthermore, after a period of discussion, the groups could then be remixed to get greater interaction between all members of the Team. The double intended benefit being a greater diversity of ideas as well as stronger relationships right across the Team.

The agenda for the meeting also changed, partly at the behest of the Chief of the Air Staff, and partly through the auspices of the external facilitator. It was dominated by Royal Air Force Transformation, what it was, and what the United States Air Force was doing in a similar respect. Like the first meeting in February, the second meeting lasted from midday one day to midday the next, including a dinner for more relaxed social contact. However, a significant proportion of the meeting was given over to what the group being brought together was for, what success looked like for that group, and what their own code of behaviour was to be (Jupp, 2007a). This self-determination of the Team was in line with the necessary elements of the formation of large informational type teams: the need for a team; a clear purpose; the right

composition; the right structure, support and coaching; and leadership (Wageman et al., 2008, Wageman et al., 2005). Less time was given to the Chief of the Air Staff to deliver his intent. Instead, the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff was given time to lay out the matters of the moment in the Ministry of Defence as he saw them.

The agenda was full to meet the expectations and desires of the Team to have sufficient 'meat' to justify their attendance (Jupp, 2007a: 182, Wageman et al., 2008). The overall format of the meeting lasting from lunchtime one day to lunchtime the next with a dinner in the evening was retained, though an external speaker was not brought in for the dinner this time so that there was more time for the members of the Team to interact socially.

It was at this meeting that the air marshals decided to call themselves the Senior Leadership Team as stated in Chapter 1. The behavioural code for the Team was discussed in a workshop designed to ensure that the discussions were not dominated by the senior members of the Team and that every member had an input to them. This allowed the Chief of the Air Staff to sum up his thoughts about the Team and afterwards to draw up the Senior Leadership Team Manifesto (Torpy, 2007). He also drew the following diagram to illustrate his ideas:

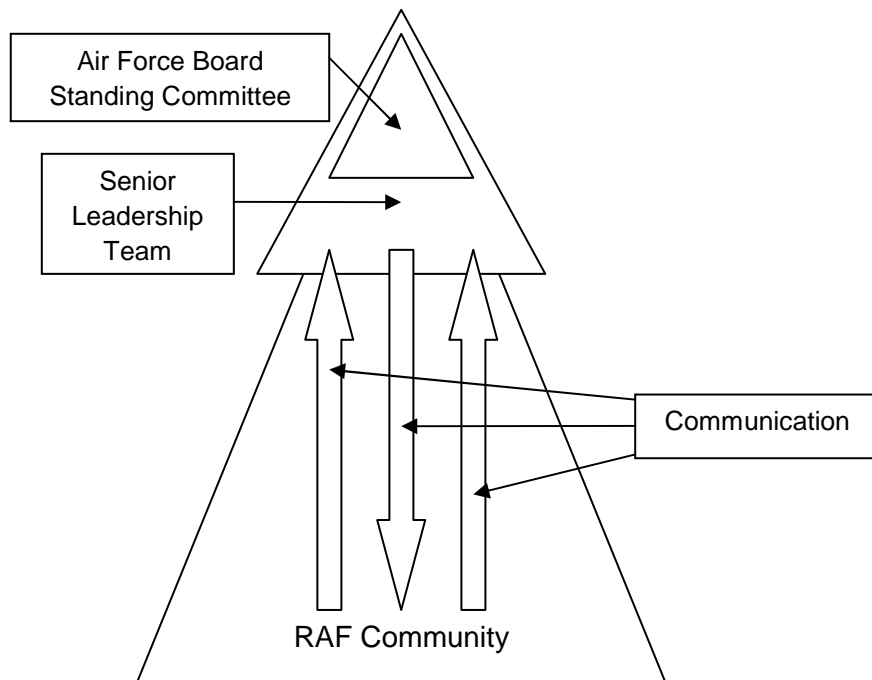


Figure 1 Position of the Senior Leadership Team (Jupp, 2007b: 2)

The third meeting of the Team occurred in September 2007 after a trial for a method for the Team to engage in wider communication with the rest of the Royal Air Force. The agenda was again a full one to meet the desire of the members of the team for a worthwhile agenda. Agreement was secured for the Team to engage in the wider communication exercise after a thorough examination of the trial. Other matters that the Chief wanted discussed were also addressed including Royal Air Force Transformation. A simmering dispute between two members of the Team was brought into the open for the Team to discuss how these things should be dealt with. Finally, the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff also covered the Matters of the Moment before it was decided to meet again in December (Jupp, 2007a: 129-35).

5.1.2 Development of the Senior Leadership Team

At this point, Royal Air Force Transformation thrust itself into this programme again. The majority of the air marshals were asked to meet several times in the autumn of 2007 to create the top down structure for the Transformation effort for those lower down the organisation to aim at in their Transformation work. These meetings were not full meetings of the Senior Leadership Team and were facilitated by a different external company, though they were usually confused with meetings of the Team as the Team behavioural code, the Senior Leadership Team Manifesto, was used to guide their work as well. Thus some confusion as to what the Senior Leadership Team was, and was not, crept in to the minds of those attending (Jupp, 2007a).

Sir Glenn Torpy also asked the Head of the Royal Air Force Leadership Centre to create a development plan for the Senior Leadership Team (Jupp, 2007b). This laid out the areas on which the Team should work. It was based on the 'what' and the 'how' of strategic holistic development, the so called hard and soft areas (Burke and Litwin, 1992). This plan also laid out the eight lines of development along which the Senior Leadership Team would be progressed in future meetings as shown in Figure 2.

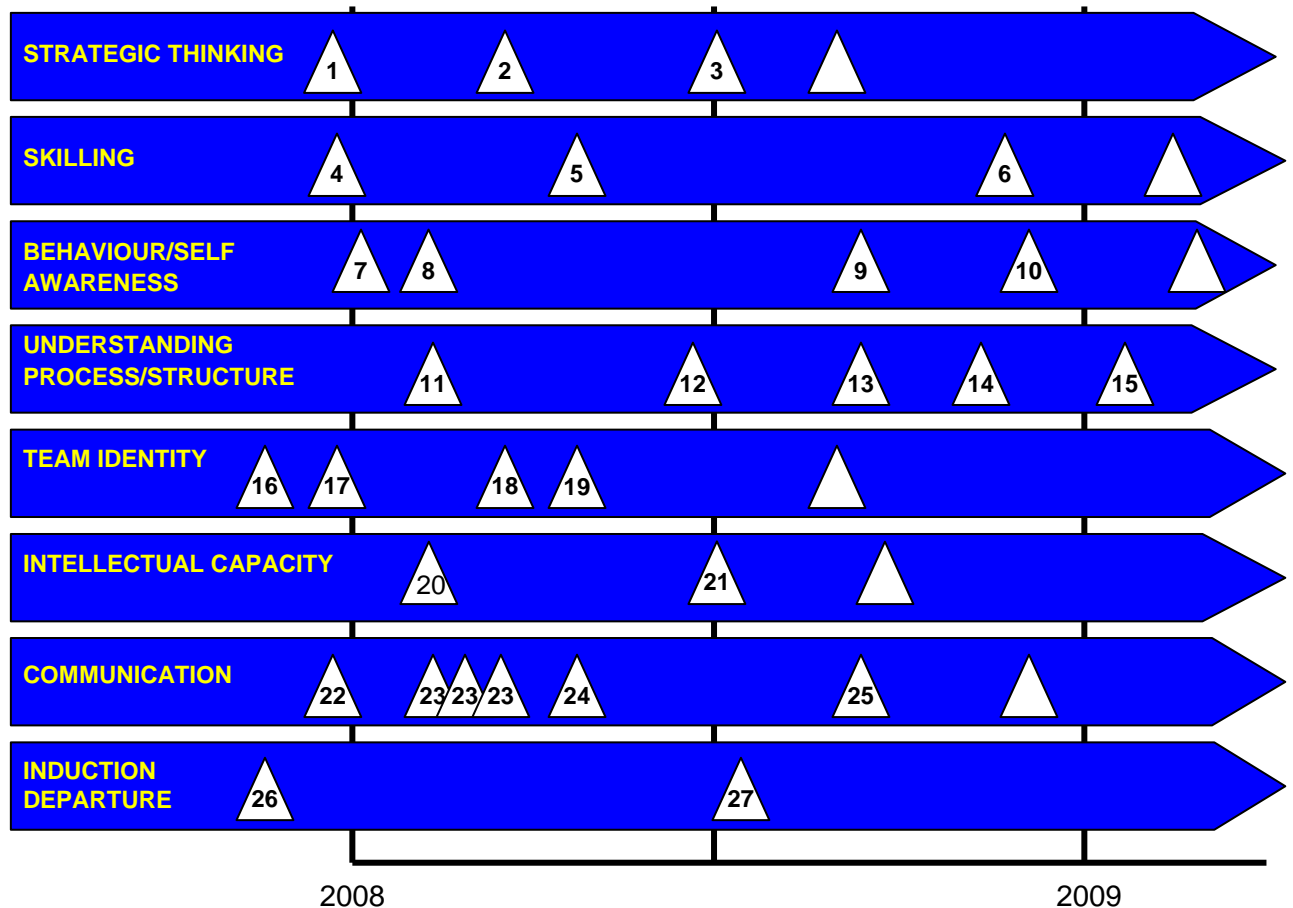


Figure 2: Meeting Plan for the Senior Leadership Team (Jupp, 2007b: 6)

Over a series of meetings it was intended that all these areas would be addressed but that not all would be touched upon at any one meeting. The plan also laid out which meetings would touch upon which lines of development (indicated by the triangles in Figure 2). However, as each meeting came along circumstances prevented the plan being adhered to and the plan then was adapted to meet the needs of the Chief of the Air Staff for that meeting. The plan was in constant revision and the Head of the Royal Air Force Leadership Centre in constant research to meet the needs of the Team at the next meeting. Each new meeting became predicated by

the learning and position achieved in its predecessor, very much following the pattern of Action Research (Revans, 1980, Herr and Anderson, 2005).

The meeting agendas were initially packed to meet the desire of Team members for a 'meaty' programme to justify their time. Consequently, some subjects then received short time which was an annoyance to various members of the Team (Jupp, 2007a). As the meetings progressed into their second year in 2008, the pattern of the agenda was amended to include a 'matters of the moment' brief from the Chief of the Air Staff or his Assistant Chief on the strategic concerns of Defence and the direction the Chief was taking, a discussion of an issue of strategic import to the Service and 'Team development' discussion. The Team development discussions required constant research by the Head of the Royal Air Force Leadership Centre and the external facilitator to make best use of effort. Nevertheless, Team members recognised that there was both a formal benefit in discussing issues within the Royal Air Force (for example Jupp, 2007a: 181) and an informal one from networking and the feeling of being a team, rather than individuals, in a large organisation (Jupp, 2007a: 185).

5.1.3 Communication with the wider Royal Air Force

Because of the extensive meetings of the air marshals to deal with the immediate needs of the Royal Air Force Transformation programme in the autumn of 2007, the scheduled meeting of the Senior Leadership Team for December that year was cancelled. With the agreement of the Chief of the Air Staff, the researcher

interviewed the members of the Senior Leadership Team to prepare them for the communication exercise that was to take place in the New Year.

The communication exercise was designed to be different from the traditional visits of air marshals to stations where the air marshal addresses a large group (though a small percentage of the total personnel on the station) and perhaps meets a few prepared small groups where often little beyond formal niceties are exchanged. Here large groups of station personnel were to be prepared by discussing issues and they would then tell the small group of two or three air marshals their views on the strategic issues facing the Royal Air Force. The theme of 'Agile, Adaptable, Capable' from the Royal Air Force Strategy (Royal, 2006) was used to frame the discussions. The main point of this was for the air marshals to be seen listening to the men and women on the front line of the Service rather than just telling them.

For the communication exercise, the facilitator and researcher designed a facilitated format for the Team to visit as many Royal Air Force Stations as possible in the space of two months, in January and February 2008, prior to the next meeting of the Team at the end of February 2008. A total of nine of the largest of the Stations were visited by the Team working in groups of three.

Prior to the members of the Senior Leadership Team arriving, the researcher facilitated three workshops in the world cafe style where five questions were debated; each workshop was attended by one of three strata of the station hierarchy. The ranks were split into three strata to facilitate more open discussion. The five questions debated were all based around the Royal Air Force's vision statement as follows:

1. How agile, adaptable and capable do you think you are at present?
2. What would it take for agility, adaptability and capability to increase at the level at which you are working?
3. If senior leadership in the RAF wants to promote agility, adaptability and capability, what should it keep doing and what should it stop doing or do differently?
4. If you and your work colleagues were able to make changes at the local level that would increase agility, adaptability and capability, what would you do and why?
5. What would it take for the RAF to really bring its behaviours into line with the RAF Core Values and the Civil Service Code?

Once the debates had been conducted, the members of the Senior Leadership Team were brought in to hear a summary of the points made from five representatives (one for each question) of each of the three strata of the station hierarchy. Any member of the station, including those who had not taken part in the original debates, was invited to listen to the session with the Senior Leadership Team members. The Team members then promised to take away the points made and discuss them at the next Senior Leadership Team meeting at the end of February and return to the station to inform them of the results of that discussion (Jupp, 2008a).

The Team met at the end of February 2008 and discussed, amongst other things, the communication exercise. The outcomes of this were fed forward into the Chief of the Air Staff's Conference for Air Officers and Station Commanders, which was

held immediately after the Senior Leadership Team Meeting, and out of the exercise a series of lines-to-take were crafted for the Team to take back to the Stations that they had visited (Jupp, 2008a: 142-6).

5.1.4 Continuing Team Meetings

After the Communication exercise, the Senior Leadership Team met again in April 2008. Though the Team had previously wanted a packed agenda to feel that their time was justified, the agenda for this meeting was reduced to just three items as the Team realised that the in-depth discussions that they were being asked to have were too frequently cut short so that other agenda items could be addressed. The format for all the meetings was decided to be a Matters of the Moment brief from the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff, a discussion on a topic important to the Chief of the Air Staff and the Team, and a Team development session (Jupp, 2008a: 186-7).

After the cancelled June 2008 meeting, the Team met again in September 2008 at an external location with the minimum of observers. The agenda for this meeting was fuller than the previous meeting to fulfil the expectations of the air marshals themselves. Interestingly, it was at this meeting that a small number of the Team forced a change in the agenda to discuss what they felt was a more urgent and important topic than the 'strategic issue' that the Chief of the Air Staff had decided upon. Partly because of this event, the Chief wanted to find out what it was that the Senior Leadership Team members wanted to discuss at these sessions. This became one of the questions that was asked at the interviews with all members of the Team which were carried out at the end of the Year (Jupp, 2009a: 67-82).

The final meeting of 2008 was in December just prior to the Chief of the Air Staff's Warrant Officers' Conference. Because of the Conference and, again, because the Chief of the Air Staff's time was short, this meeting was to be an informal dinner followed by one full day for the Team, many of whom then attended a pre-conference dinner and conference the following day. It was also on a single topic – strategy for the Service – which had emerged as the single most wanted topic among the members of the Team (Jupp, 2009a: 131-9).

The four meetings planned for 2009 continued with the midday to midday, with informal dinner, format. The meetings also continued with an agenda with three major topics, one of which would be a Team behaviours session, though the 'matters of the moment' brief from the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff was moved to dinner, increasing the overall size or 'meatiness' of the agenda.

The meeting in February 2009 was not felt to be successful by either the Chief of the Air Staff or the members of the Team. This was because the agenda was again forcibly changed during the meeting. This time, however, it was not because of some more urgent or important subject but because the topic as presented was very badly received (Jupp, 2009a: 177-9). The reasons and outcomes for this are discussed at length later in this Chapter.

The meeting in June 2009 was well prepared so that the problems that arose in February did not recur. A single topic for discussion was chosen, Royal Air Force Strategy, for two reasons. First was the looming General Election in May 2010 with concomitant possible changes in National Defence Policy; the second reason was the

imminent change of the Chief of the Air Staff which was to happen in August 2009.

There was a reaffirmation of the Senior Leadership Team Manifesto and some empowering of the three new members attending to hold the old members to account against it. A different facilitation method was also used to control the discussion (Jupp, 2010b: 63-5).

The Senior Leadership Team meeting in September 2009 was to be a Staff Ride, and planned to visit various battlefields on the borders between France and Germany to examine battles from 1870 to 1940 at the strategic and operational levels. The history was to be delivered by experts and the contemporary discussions taken forward by the Senior Leadership Team. At the last moment, because of political events at the time made it impolitic to spend money on such an event (see, for example, the Daily Telegraph reporting of the Chief of the General Staff, Sir Richard Dannett's, expenses in September 2009) the event was changed to a two-day meeting at a non-Royal Air Force, United Kingdom location where the historical information was used to seed a discussion of the contemporary leadership situation. Despite the scepticism of many members of the Team because they were not visiting the battlefields, the meeting was successful and set the tone for future meetings under the new Chief of the Air Staff (Jupp, 2010b: 86-91).

The final meeting of 2009 was in November. It reverted to the planned, but frequently changed, normal agenda of three items and a Matters of the Moment brief. With a major topic to discuss that was both urgent and important, the meeting was considered both very useful and successful (Jupp: 120-3).

5.2

Data Analysis

With the ethnography of the Senior Leadership Team complete, the 5-point model for creating a team and the further 3 areas of changing culture, power and trust derived from the literature review can be analysed. The next section will examine each point of the Wageman et al (2008) model in turn.

1. The need for the team;
2. A clear purpose for the team;
3. The right composition;
4. The right structure, support and coaching;
5. Strong leadership;

5.2.1 Analysis of the Model

1. The Need for a Team.

The need for some form of team at the top of the Royal Air Force is just why it was formed. The Chief of the Air Staff wanted to work with a team to get the views and expertise of all the air marshals available to him. This follows the reasoning of Wageman et al (2008) that the need for a team is predicated by the leader of the team wanting to work in a team. Indeed, at the first meeting of the Team, the Chief of the Air Staff stated that he enjoyed working in this way (Jupp, 2004b). The need was also apparent in the explicit non-collegiate behaviours of some of those air marshals that were causing leadership behavioural problems throughout the organisation. Behaviours that the Chief of the Air Staff wanted to change (Jupp, 2004b).

Equally well, the need was recognised by its members, for example: *'It will endure. It must do so'* (Interview Team member T) is a direct reference. Many of the Team saw both the potential and actual benefit of having a Senior Leadership Team, the need for it, in what it had achieved, or could achieve:

'The development of that sense of unity seems to me to be the transcending quality that you should seek to develop from the SLT' (Interview Team Member B)

'Just the idea of getting together and discussing through these sorts of issues and getting a common understanding and aiming towards some degree of alignment, I think that's important, that is why it should continue.' (Interview Team member I)

'The simple fact of talking about subjects is significantly beneficial.' (Interview Team member C)

'[The meetings] are helpful in creating that common understanding and therefore that greater alignment' (Interview Team member F)

'I think it has created a spirit of openness and understanding' (Interview Team member O)

'There wasn't a consistent set of messages from the senior leadership of the Air Force. I think there are much more today.' (Interview Team member C)

This set of quotes shows that the members of the Team clearly saw a need for the Team although that need may not be singular in origin for all its members. For

these members the Team meetings were a worthwhile endeavour and a good use of their time. The Senior Leadership Team was needed. For others, the need for the Team may be seen in the negative views of their colleagues:

'We've too many individuals and not enough team players ... people who have their own opinion and find it difficult to move away from their own opinion.'

(Interview Team member A)

'There are still personal agendas running or even scores' (Interview Team Member F)

For these members, the Senior Leadership Team had not managed to make 'team players' of all the air marshals or stop the poor behaviours that had also been noticed by the Chief of the Air Staff but, nevertheless, the need for a team was still recognised. It may be that these members thought that the Senior Leadership Team was not the most effective method for solving these problems. If they did have such a view though, it is not recorded in the interviews or elsewhere. However, they clearly saw a need for remedial action and the Senior Leadership Team was the chosen method to resolve the problems.

Other members of the team saw a continuing need for the Team as, though they recognised that progress had been made, there was still more to be done:

'I'm not sure we're yet good enough at pulling an issue apart through open discussion when rank matters very little' (Interview Team member N).

'There is a group thing based on groupthink formed on what CAS [Chief of the Air Staff] thinks' (Interview Team member J)

The recognition that progress had been made was widespread over the period of observation from the first meeting of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team.

For example:

'I do feel that I'm part of a team and I think it's very exceptional value' or 'the leadership team is forming up quite well' (Interview Team member A) and

'It has changed my attitude to work being a member of that team' (Interview Team member C).

'I think so far that most people concerned agree [there is value in the SLT meeting]' (Interview Team member J)

Again, however, others thought that there was still room for improvement, that there was a continuing need for a team:

'I think we are a reasonable team ... but there's more work we need to do because the more aligned and cooperative we are ... the more effective we are going to be' (Interview Team member B) and

'We're more of a team than we were ... it's still hit and miss ... the competition for promotion still gets in the way' (Interview Team member D).

In sum, it was clear that the Chief of the Air Staff wanted to work in a team with the top members of his organisation. It was also clear that there was a need for the

Team, seen both by those top members and the Chief of the Air Staff. A need to be a more aligned and effective senior leadership, a need to work together better rather than just competing against each other, a need to use their collective intelligence and wisdom to better effect rather than just agreeing with 'the boss'.

From the need for the Team, the purpose of the Team should be able to be distilled. Without a clear purpose, however, the Team cannot coalesce and agree why they are meeting and understand the compelling reason for their existence. The next section of this chapter will examine the purpose of the Senior Leadership Team.

2. A Clear Purpose for the Team.

Having established that there was a need for the team, it should follow logically that the purpose of the team should be clear. This is not always the case. Wageman et al (2008) acknowledge that the purpose of a team, which should carry consequentiality, challenge and clarity (Wageman et al., 2008: 64), can take two years discussion to realise. Certainly even after two years of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team there was significant doubt as to what it was all about:

'I'm not sure that we have entirely formed as a team. A team should probably have a clear aim for its existence. I'm not sure that we've got as much clarity as we might in that' (Interview Team member F) and

'It will fall by the wayside if it's not clear about what is a successful SLT event' (Interview Team member I) or

'I don't think there's an understanding out there of what the SLT is, what its aims are, what it's trying to achieve' (Interview Team member L).

These comments come despite the very clear manifesto for the Team (Torpy, 2007) that the Chief of the Air Staff circulated to the Team (and to the next rank level down across the whole of the Royal Air Force). A manifesto that the Chief of the Air Staff drew together from the discussion that was held about the purpose of the Team at its second meeting in June 2007, a discussion which included what a successful meeting might look like (Jupp, 2007a: 60-2).

Not unlike the examples of complex teams that Wageman et al (2008) give, the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team continually struggled to understand what its purpose was. That is not to say that there was not, at times, amongst some of the Team, understanding of the purpose of the Team. The comment that *'the SLT will be able to contribute not decide'* (Jupp, 2008a: 184-5) shows the understanding that the wider Team will help the decision making bodies make their decisions. Equally, at times certain members could see a challenging and clear purpose for the Team that had great consequentiality such as when the agenda for a meeting was changed to accommodate a discussion of how to deal with operational overstretch that might lead to immediate strategic failure (Jupp, 2009a: 77). Even though not all the members of the Team thought that the change in the agenda that day was the right thing to do, they all found the discussions productive.

A change to the agenda for the Senior Leadership Team meetings was forced on another occasion and it is instructive to look at these two instances in some detail.

The first occasion was in September 2008 (Jupp, 2009a: 77) and the second in February 2009 (Jupp, 2009a: 178-179). It is clear that some within the Team were using their power to change the agenda, in both cases it was an agenda item that the Chief of the Air Staff wanted to address that was abandoned, the original agenda being his.

In the first instance, there was an immediate urgency to the new issue for discussion. The loss of the Nimrod aircraft on operations over Afghanistan, with its associated loss of seventeen lives, brought the Royal Air Force into the national headlines. The fear was that the operational and financial stretch in the Service would possibly lead to strategic failure. The urgency of this issue easily pushed the longer-term, strategic issue out. The Chief of the Air Staff and the other members there were persuaded to the change. It must be said that some did object to the change later, which will be discussed below.

On the second occasion, however, the situation was more complex. The original agenda subject had been presented, and the discussion of it had started, when the 'rebellion' by two of the air marshals present began. The Chief of the Air Staff attempted to keep the discussion on the original agenda item going, with support from one other air marshal. The 'rebellious' air marshals persisted and seemed to capture the mood of the majority of the rest of the members of the Senior Leadership Team present so the Chief of the Air Staff bowed to the pressure and allowed a new topic to be discussed.

The difference here was that it was not the urgency of the new topic that forced the old one out, indeed, there was no generally agreed new topic, it was the

disinclination to discuss the agenda item in front of them, in the way presented, that was the problem. There were two aspects to this. The first was that one of the two subjects was first presented by external presenters in a very poor way, as expressed by several members in the margin of the meeting. It was neither at the strategic level nor directed at the majority of the members present and thus generated a very poor discussion.

The second item was presented as work completed by one of the Senior Leadership Team members in a way that seemed he was just looking for endorsement from the rest of the Team. Having not been engaged in the earlier work, the rest of the Team quickly objected and started to pull it apart, as well as denounce the waste of their time. One member of the Team commenting '*this is not strategic leadership and not worth the SLT time*' (Jupp, 2009a: 177). The purpose of the Team was then called into question and the Chief of the Air Staff bowed to the pressure to change the discussion to keep the Team together.

These incidents are interesting on several fronts. First, on the use of power, it confirms that it is continually an issue within such a team. It also indicates that there is a limit to power in that the Chief of the Air Staff did not get his way. Either his power was not sufficient to ensure that all those of his subordinates always did his bidding, or that on this occasion he decided not to force the issue reserving his power for more important times. This follows Ward's (1639) stricture that a general must use his power sparingly if he wishes to keep it. Looked at another way, it supports the notion that power is a relationship and both superior and subordinate must acquiesce in its

use (Bratton et al., 2005, Grint, 2005). It also shows that members of the Senior Leadership Team were willing to gainsay their leaders. On both occasions the subjects that were eventually discussed were the ones that the 'rebellious' wanted to have discussed.

Nevertheless, it is indicative that many members of the Team felt that the purpose of the Team was not clear as the agenda items that the Chief of the Air Staff wanted discussed were felt not to be suitable for the Team. If the link between the purpose of the Team and the agenda items the Chief wanted discussed were as clear in the minds of the members of the Team as they were in the Chief's mind then, presumably, they would have been discussed. This lack of clarity is explicit in one interview conducted just before the meeting in question:

'I don't think there's an understanding out there of what the SLT is, what its aims are, what it's trying to achieve.' (Interview Team member L)

That the clarity of purpose of the Senior Leadership Team is disputed is evident elsewhere. Some were very clear about the need for the Team: *'there is no doubt in my mind about the need for a SLT'* (Interview Team member L) which would imply the understanding of a sufficiently clear purpose. While another member commented that *'it will require leadership in itself [to keep the SLT going]'* (Interview Team member I) implying that he was not so sure of its purpose. The ambiguity of the evidence in this respect does not seem to be out of line with that in the literature (Wageman et al., 2008) where at least two years was required to sort out a clear, challenging and consequential purpose for a team, in this case a larger consultative team.

When this need to continually work on the clarity of purpose is coupled with the issue that the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team is continually changing its membership, because of the promotion of new members into the Team and the retirement of older ones – some 60% of the Team changed in just over two years (Ross, 2008a, Ross, 2009) – it is not surprising that the issues of consequentiality, challenge and clarity in the purpose of the Team need to be constantly revisited. Even though the sentence in the Senior Leadership Team Manifesto that *'SLT [Senior Leadership Team] work represents the highest priority for members'* (Torpy, 2007) makes the Chief of the Air Staff's wishes for his team manifestly clear and adds to its consequentiality, it does not clarify the purpose.

Counter to this there are several members who thought that the consequentiality and challenge of the Team were there and improving:

'I do feel that I'm part of a team and I think it's very exceptional value' or 'the leadership team is forming up quite well' (Interview Team member A) and

'It has changed my attitude to work being a member of that team' (Interview Team member C).

'I think so far that most people concerned agree [there is value in the SLT meeting]' (Interview Team member J)

'we are beginning to harness our individual knowledge sets in a corporate way' (Interview Team member E)

'I was a significant sceptic when it started...but I will shift things in my diary to go because I think it's really valuable' (Interview Team member F) and

'that was a really good challenging session' (Jupp, 2009a: 70).

The quantitative data on the purpose of the Senior Leadership Team also confirms the difficulty of ensuring the clarity, consequentiality and challenge of the purpose of the team. The Senior Leadership Team questionnaires that were administered in 2007, 2008 and 2009 asked two questions about the purpose of the Team: question 3 was 'has a common purpose' and question 4 was 'has a clear purpose'. Figure 3 below shows the average score for these questions in each year that they were taken. In all three years both questions had a positive score (3 being neutral of a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, the left hand axis of the graph represents this scale) indicating that overall the Team thought that they had a clear and common purpose.

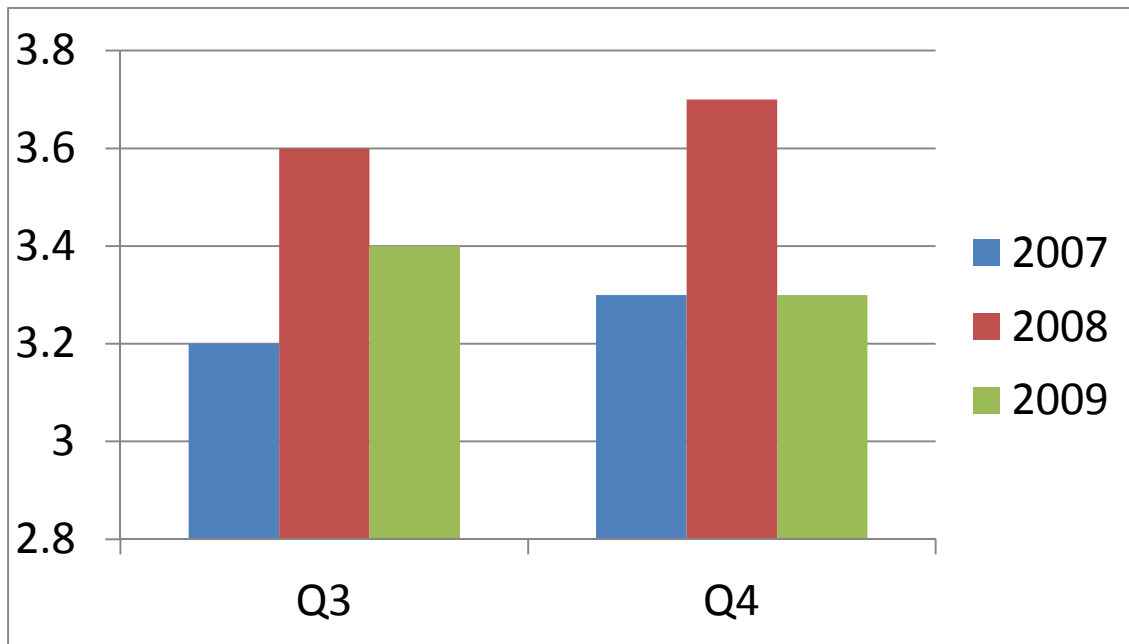


Figure 3 Purpose of the Team (from Elliott-Mabey, 2009)

However, while both questions showed a significant and positive increase over the first year, they both dropped back, though remaining overall positive, in the subsequent year. This certainly reflects the difficulty that Wageman et al (2008) note in finding a clear purpose upon which everyone can agree. And the difficulty is also reflected in the qualitative data:

'I'm not sure that we've entirely formed as a team. A team should probably have a clear aim for its existence. I'm not sure that we've got as much clarity as we might in that' (Interview Team member F) and

'a team would suggest to me far more of a single focus' (Interview Team member O)

This does not explain though why both measures should increase significantly and then reduce significantly. The first year's data would indicate that the formation of the Team was being well catered for in respect of forging a clear and common purpose. The question then has to be asked, what has changed in the second year of the data that means that the Team is not only no longer maintaining or clarifying its purpose but is actually creating more uncertainty over it? The answer would seem, almost certainly, to lie in the uncertainty being caused at the time of the survey by the imminent change of the Chief of the Air Staff alongside a significant change in the overall Team membership. The survey was taken in June of 2009 while the change of in the leader of the Team was due in August of that year and had already been announced by the time the questionnaire was sent out. The evidence for this lies in the qualitative data. In one of the last of the second set of interviews to be conducted, which occurred in early 2009, and when the changeover of Chief was already known:

'for the new Chief, he should ponder what is the output from [the Senior Leadership Team] and then work back from there' (Interview Team member G).

The observations of the first meeting of the Team under the new leadership in September 2009 also reflect the uncertainty. The meeting was initially planned to be a 'Staff Ride', where the group was to be taken away to walk the battlefields of the past and after the real history of the events had been explained they would then discuss the implications for leading the Royal Air Force today and in the future. However, because of the political situation at the time where the Chief of the General Staff (the head of the Army) was accused by the then government of profligacy in times of

austerity (see for example the Daily Telegraph August 2009), it was decided that rather than travel to the battlefields to examine the history, this would be done in the conference room risking a considerable loss of impact as well as a much reduced opportunity for the Team to bond under the new leadership.

Remarks made as the Team gathered for the start of the meeting reflect the mood of uncertainty and loss of belief in the purpose of the Team: '*moving from World War 3 to World War 1, just what we need right now; not!*' and '*Tactical Exercise Without Terrain⁴ – pointless!*' (Jupp, 2010b: 86). Both these remarks were made using considerable sarcasm. They also reflect both the frustration that the value of the meeting was likely to be small for the effort because of the compromises over the Staff Ride and the seeming lack of purpose and direction. The bonding effect of going abroad and travelling together for three days was recognised to be completely different from that of spending a day together in a conference room and having a dinner together. Yet during the meeting the new Chief of the Air Staff had given clear direction to the Team which was welcomed (Jupp, 2010b: 90), and at least two members of the Team had expressed how good they had felt the meeting to be (Jupp, 2010b: 91). There is every indication that the Team had coalesced around a clear and common purpose. Further research would be needed to confirm that this qualitative interpretation of the quantitative data is correct but 2009 was the last iteration of this questionnaire to be completed by the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team.

⁴ A 'Tactical Exercise Without Troops' is an accepted method used by the British Army to war-game scenarios without excessive cost and pointless effort of large numbers of personnel. These are sometimes known as 'desktop exercises'.

At the end of the same meeting in 2009, two of the new members of the Team also said that they would have scored the questionnaire higher had they had the chance to attend the meeting prior to completing the questionnaire (Jupp, 2010a: 91). While the comment was made specifically in relation to the question on trust, as that was the question that was debated directly at the meeting, it is reasonable to suppose that other scores would have also benefitted from the meeting being attended prior to the questionnaire being completed. It can only be supposition that the quantitative scores for the purpose of the Team would have recovered had they been measured again; however, the qualitative data gives a very reasonable explanation of why they suffered at the end of the second year of measurement.

In sum, the clarity of purpose of the Team needed constant attention and drive from the leader of the Team to ensure that it was understood both in the literature (Wageman et al., 2008) and in the case study. The case study shows this to be particularly necessary when uncertainty caused by a change of leader might cast doubt on the purpose and drive behind the Team. The case study also confirmed that effort spent on the clarity, challenge and consequentiality of the purpose of the Senior Leadership Team developed the sense of purpose in the Team.

3. The right composition (including those necessary regardless of behaviour).

The third of the criteria identified in the literature review for the formation and sustainment of a large team is getting the composition of the team right. Here Wageman et al (2008) are looking to ensure that the right people are on the team and, just as importantly, the wrong people are off it. As they put it, you must get the

composition right to prevent '*allowing the same old habits to determine what occurs*' (Wageman et al., 2008: 115).

Within small decision making teams the sense of this is intuitive. Ensuring the right membership of the team is just common sense – having those covering the right areas, having the right skills and those who fit in with the team, are able to challenge without disrupting, able to think away from and move on from old positions etc – is obvious. However, the same intuitiveness is not apparent with large informational type teams. If the team is there to ensure that information is gathered from and passed back to all corners of the organisation, then all members of the organisation at the right level (within a hierarchy) must be there by definition. If they are not then information will not be passed back to, nor gathered from, that part of the organisation whose people have been excluded. This is also true of teams where opinion and expertise is wanted from all parts of a diverse organisation such as Defence as a whole, and the Royal Air Force.

Indeed, for the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team, its dual purpose of behaviour or culture change as well as information and idea gathering would push the team membership to be inclusive rather than exclusive despite behaviours that might perpetuate the same old habits. Those very behaviours are the ones that the Chief wanted to change. Exclusion from the Team was hardly likely to achieve this. The Chief of the Air Staff specifically stated that he wanted all air marshals on promotion to the rank of air vice marshal to be included in the Team, without exception (Torpy,

2007). Thus the only method of dealing with '*the same old habits determining what occurred*' would then be facilitation within the Team to directly address them.

Here the differences between large information type teams and small decision-making type teams are important. Within small teams, facilitation methods are limited and those whose behaviour is problematical are difficult to deal with. Exclusion can be the only answer, vide Wageman et al. In large teams there is more scope for facilitation and it can be effective. The Royal Air Force's Senior Leadership Team was large as it varied in number between thirty two and thirty four members during the period of the observations (Ross, 2008c, Ross, 2009); however, at meetings of the Team several were absent for varying reasons and the attendance was between twenty two and twenty eight (Ross, 2008a, Ross, 2008b). The overall size of the Team is therefore some three to four times the size of a 'team' such as most described in the literature, and, in attendance, the Senior Leadership Team is some two to three times the size of such teams. It is also larger than the groups used in the experiments on the group size paradox (Esteban and Ray, 2001). Getting all members of a group to participate in discussions would also require facilitation.

The effectiveness of facilitation and meetings to directly address behaviour can be seen from the Senior Leadership Team. For example at one meeting (Jupp, 2009a: 78-80) a good whole-team discussion was held using one sort of facilitation. At the same time, significant behavioural change was noted between two members of the Team who had previously disagreed on principle, much to the surprise of other Team members. Again, at a separate meeting (Jupp, 2009a: 136), good teamwork and

discussions were noted – old habits were not being allowed to determine what occurred. However, constant effort is required in this respect as the old habits die hard and can resurface later, (see for example Jupp, 2010b: 66). Though, in this instance the behaviours were swiftly corrected by the Chief of the Air Staff and the external facilitator, which, again, demonstrates the need for both strong leadership and facilitation.

The data on behaviour from the interviews is mixed, confirming the observation data above that constant effort is needed with facilitation and leadership to ensure that behaviour does not mean that the meetings descend into previous unproductiveness. On the positive side, there were plenty of comments showing a perceived improvement in behaviour:

‘Sometimes the behaviours I see are great.’ (Interview Team member K)

‘I didn’t notice as much bad behaviour as I did maybe a couple of years ago’

(Interview Team member O)

Then there were those who had a mixed view:

‘I think there are one or two that would be [self-centredness] personified’

(Interview Team member G)

‘I think we are a reasonable team ... but there’s more work we need to do because the more aligned and cooperative we are ... the more effective we’re going to be.’ (Interview Team member B)

And there were also those who still saw poor behaviour:

'There are still personal agenda running or even scores' (Interview Team member F)

'Those that emphasise the individual over the group, those that seek to protect the power of an individual or group at the expense of the Air Force as a whole.'
(Interview Team member M)

Qualitative data is always open to interpretation and the meaning constructed from it changes depending on where the emphasis is laid. The set of statements above could lead to the impression that behaviour had not changed much as sometimes all groups have their better behavioural moments which an optimist among them would interpret as change for the better. However, there is considerable weight of evidence that the behaviours within the group were improving:

'[The Senior Leadership Team] is generating the willingness to listen and talk across the rank gradient' (Interview Team member U) and

'It has changed my attitude to work being a member of that team' (Interview Team member C).

'when I looked up as a one star [just prior to the formation of the Senior Leadership Team] I just saw a bunch of individuals working in their own stove pipes in their own areas talking to each other where they were mates and stabbing [each other in the back] where they weren't ... I think we're far removed from that now, clearly it's not perfect' (Interview Team member A).

There is also the data from the observations that a particular dispute between two members of the Senior Leadership Team that had been running for a considerable period before the formation of the Team was contained and ameliorated by the workings of the Team. These two members disagreed with each other almost on principle and their feud was widely known to have set the two parts of the organisation that they were responsible for at loggerheads. First, some eighteen months into the meetings of the Team, one of the protagonists in this admitted to 'robust disagreement' with the other openly in front of the whole meeting much to the surprise of his colleagues (Jupp, 2009a: 78-9). At the next meeting, almost two years into the series of meetings, during a plenary session first one of these protagonists then the other said they agreed with the point made by the other (Jupp, 2009a: 133-5). Again there was considerable surprise from their colleagues.

Many meetings prior to those of the Senior Leadership Team had been soured by the behaviour of these two to each other. The manner of the Team meetings and the leadership and facilitation of them managed to lead to considerably better behaviours to the benefit of all. In other words, including those whose behaviours might lead to the '*same old habits determining what occurred*' (Wageman et al., 2008: 115) does not mean that those habits will determine what occurs, provided the leadership and facilitation within the team is there and the issue is addressed.

While the qualitative data is clear that there was a change in behaviours to support the collegiate team-working, and information sharing that it was set out to

achieve, it was not uniformly positive. There were also negative views as shown above and as one would expect. The quantitative data also supported this.

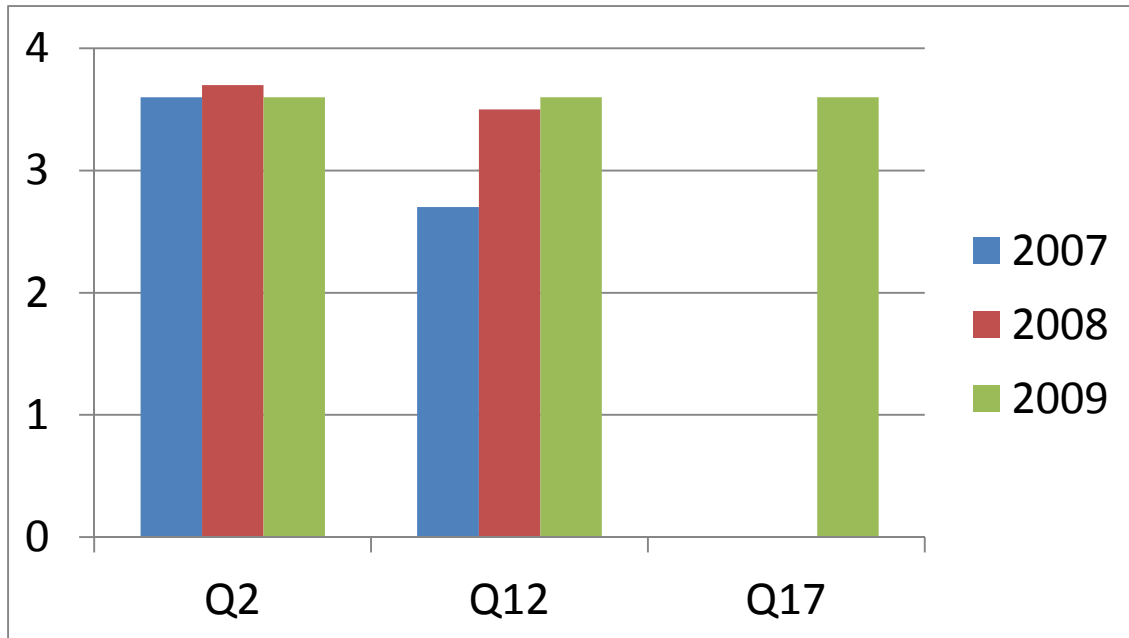


Figure 4 Team Behaviours (From Elliott-Mabey, 2009)

The graph in figure 4 is constructed from the data from the Senior Leadership Team surveys carried out over the course of the meetings. Question 2 was 'Respects each other's contribution', question 12 was 'Works as a team' and question 17 was 'Cooperates with each other'. Question 17 was a new question for the third and last iteration of the survey. Again, the vertical scale is a 5-point Likert one from 1-strongly disagrees to 5-strongly agrees and with 3 being neutral.

It would seem from the quantitative data that the team always, by and large, respected each other's contribution as the answer to question 2 started and remained in positive territory. However, as an average of 3.6 there must have been those who answered this question at least neutrally. Comparing this with the qualitative data,

where there was ample evidence that some believed there continued to be problems with behaviours, there is good correlation that while this is true, the weight of evidence is there that the more positive view should prevail.

Triangulating this with the evidence shown in the answers to question 12, working as a team, the picture builds further. Here the view of the Team of themselves at the beginning of their journey into the Senior Leadership Team was that they did not work particularly well with each other as the average response to the question was negative. However, as time progressed, working as part of the Senior Leadership Team, this negative view became positive. The qualitative evidence above showing that the Team was improving is borne out as the majority view in the quantitative evidence. That the view is not more positive in the third iteration of the survey is an indication that continual effort on this aspect of the Team is required, also reinforcing the qualitative data.

Although there is no longitudinal data for question 17, cooperating with each other, this answer too shows that overall the Team was positive about this aspect of itself. By the summer of 2009 the Senior Leadership Team thought that it was more cooperative with each other than not. This is yet another indication that the inclusive requirement of the composition of the Team did not work to its detriment. Behaviours were being changed for the better, for the advantage of the whole of the organisation. One of the dual aims of the Team was being met. Perhaps the last word on this should be left to the leader of the Team, the Chief of the Air Staff: *'Just one session of this can*

only be of benefit to the Service, I am already seeing this in the Team.' (Jupp, 2007a: 129).

Moving onto the second problem induced by including all those required, facilitation is necessary to deal with the universally accepted issue of the difficulty of getting wide engagement of all members of a large team: the group size paradox (Esteban and Ray, 2001). As the Team is larger than those experimented with in the literature (Hsu, 1985, Gallupe et al., 1992, Vogel et al., 1987, Davison, 2001, Esteban and Ray, 2001, Bass and Norton, 1951, Gibb, 1951, Barker, 1965) the expectation from the literature review was that this phenomenon would be more pronounced. The phenomenon put simply states that the larger the group, the fewer members of it participate.

The various plenary sessions of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team where discussions were held as a whole group demonstrated this effect, especially at the early meetings, though the issue was never fully eliminated (see for example Jupp, 2009a: 67 where a plenary session was dominated with adverse results on the majority) and (Jupp, 2010b: 62 where there is, for the most part, a plenary not dominated by a few). The second example is good evidence that as the Team came together and developed, the facilitation needed to overcome the group size paradox becomes easier, but it also serves to show that the facilitation is always necessary as the engagement across the Team was not perfect.

The facilitation method used on the majority of occasions to overcome the group size paradox was the world cafe (Brown and Isaacs, 2005) where conversations

were had in small groups and the groups continually mixed to ensure the maximum airing of all opinions. One aspect of the success of this method can be demonstrated by the natural alignment of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team that was noted by senior officers from the other Services (Jupp, 2009a: 131, 179) and commented upon by some members: *'whoever touches the RAF gets the same story'* (Interview Team member V). A consensus of opinion was achieved just because all had participated in the discussions and understood the issues.

In large teams there is, perhaps, more scope for different facilitation methods which can be effective as the size allows for different groupings to be achieved. Even, once the Team became used to better discussions, whole, large group discussion could be achieved with facilitation mostly kept to prior preparation of those who, by dint of power or hierarchy, would otherwise dominate discussion: see for example (Jupp, 2009a: 78-80). At the same meeting, significant behavioural change was also noted between two members of the Team who had previously disagreed on principle and this occurred again at a separate meeting (Jupp, 2009a: 136) where good teamwork and discussions were noted as facilitation prevented the problem of the group size paradox.

In summary, determining the right composition for a large informational type team is not quite the same as determining the right composition for a small decision making team. For the one, inclusivity is important and facilitation has to be used to overcome the disadvantages outlined by Wageman et al (2008). While exclusivity is important for the other to get the right people on the team to ensure that it functions

properly. Wageman et al's third criterion therefore differs between small and large teams. It is not that the criterion is unimportant in the case of the large team, it is important. The composition of these sorts of teams needs careful consideration. All those who need to be on the team should be included to ensure that every opinion or view is captured, if that is the purpose of the team. When this is the case, that inclusion is more important than exclusion used to make the team work, careful consideration needs to be given to the facilitation necessary to make the team work, both to deal with behaviour and the group size paradox. Both an impartial facilitator with suitable methods of facilitation and good leadership of the team are necessary. This last criterion also holds true when cultural change is sought, which will be discussed further in the third part of this Chapter.

4. The Right Structure, Support and Coaching.

The fourth need identified in the literature review is the structure, support and coaching that is necessary for a team. The administrative functions that a team needs to be able to operate form the majority of the support required. For the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team these were all in place. The Royal Air Force Leadership Centre provided most of those. One air vice marshal was appointed by the Chief of the Air Staff to be the conduit through which he and the Leadership Centre would work for the administration of the team. This occurred after it was realised that there was a need for a peer within the Team to act as a convener as the Chief of the Air Staff did not have time to do that, and some members of the Team felt able to ignore requests from lower down the hierarchy (Jupp, 2007a: 137).

Within the structure of the team, Wageman et al note the importance of the agenda. They assert that a stale agenda will provoke continuing habits. Habits that will not allow new ways of working to transform the team. Equally, they also note that if tactical issues are dealt with early, the discussion can be hijacked by these relatively easy to think about, but not necessarily to agree on, subjects. Strategic issues must come first and tactical ones be left to the end of meetings to prevent the tactical forcing out the messy, grey and difficult to conceptualise strategic issues. Within the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team, most members agreed that what should be discussed was strategy in some form or another, though this was not universal (Jupp, 2009b). The members also demanded a 'meaty' agenda, which, even if this demand was in part to justify their attendance, reinforces the importance of the agenda in senior meetings.

The 'meaty' agenda also had other consequences within the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team as it became obvious that agendas with too many subjects on them inevitably led to some of those subjects not being discussed, or not discussed to the satisfaction of some of the members (Jupp, 2007a: 136). To prevent this happening, the meetings of the Senior Leadership Team were brought into a pattern. They would start at noon on one day and finish at noon on the following day. An educative lecture and discussion was to be had on the first afternoon, a session on 'matters of the moment' would follow at the end of the afternoon, as this would ensure that the tactical discussions were time bound, and the following morning would be left free for a discussion on a strategic subject (Jupp, 2008a: 60).

The importance of the agenda is, therefore, not in doubt; however, it had been noted that some Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team members were easily seduced into tactical discussion rather than staying at a strategic level (Jupp, 2007a: 183). Equally, on two separate occasions the agenda for a meeting was changed during the meeting (Jupp, 2009a: 77 and 179) as outlined above. On the first of these, a strategic discussion about how the Royal Air Force should approach the 'green' agenda (carbon footprints, global warming etc) was terminated to allow the discussion of a 'capability health check'. This latter was a tactical subject in that it was about where the organisation was over stretched and where it had capacity that could be redeployed to assist those over stretched areas. However, this was done as there was a fear that, because of the catastrophic loss of a Nimrod aircraft over Afghanistan which also caused the loss of seventeen lives, a tactical failure could create strategic failure. Thus a mostly tactical discussion was had for mostly strategic purposes.

It was noticeable that the tactical discussion was more comfortable for some members of the Team

'the key thing I think is what we started on today, which is balancing tasks and resources' (Interview Team member E)

while others did not think it appropriate

'I think it was disappointing that we got hijacked on the last event into a capability health check ... we should be discussing more strategic issues actually' (Interview Team member D).

Thus the line between a tactical discussion and a strategic one became blurred and what constituted a strategic discussion was a contested issue. All members of the Senior Leadership Team had a slightly different view as to what strategy was and some only wanted to discuss within the Team those 'strategic' issues for which the Team had the wherewithal directly to do something about (Jupp, 2009b).

The conclusion here seems to be that the agenda is an important but not a sufficient instrument in the needs of the team. Both facilitation and leadership of the team are needed to keep the discussions to appropriate subjects. Even at this point, sometimes the leadership needs to allow the agenda to be set aside when the mood of a large team necessitates this, as shown by the second time this happened with the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team when the subjects introduced lost the interest of the Team and another, strategic, issue was substituted (Jupp, 2009a: 179).

On this occasion, the agenda failed to capture the interest of the majority of the Team. For a start, the subjects, while of strategic interest for the Service, were not presented in such a way as to capture a strategic discussion and the external presenters concentrated on the parts of the subject that were of interest to less than half of those present while also bordering on the tactical (Jupp, 2009a: 177-178). Equally, the second subject presented was done so in such a way as to ask the Team for endorsement of a plan rather than a strategy and did not invite their critique of that plan.

Rather than pursue this matter the Team agreed with a few, senior rebels that a more strategic discussion should be had. Although the Chief of the Air Staff tried to

keep the discussion on the original subject going, he was unable to do so in the face of concerted opposition. The agenda was changed and a strategic discussion on another aspect of military business was had (Jupp, 2009a: 179 et seq). The agenda, leadership and facilitation could not keep the Team to the subject intended, or at least the Chief of the Air Staff chose not to force the issue beyond a certain point.

Nevertheless, a strategic discussion was had, albeit different from that that was intended. The Team here seems to be making up for the rather poor performance of those presenting the subject matter on the agenda and although a few forced *their* most pressing subject on the Team rather than that of the Chief of the Air Staff, this does not look like a case of 'old habits determining what occurs' (Wageman et al., 2008) as the discussion was generally held to be both useful and necessary with the advent of a strategic defence review in the offing.

Turning to the structure of the Team, it was always intended that building the Team and becoming used to the way the meetings were held would also reduce the effects of hierarchy and allow open discussion. That this proved to be the case can be seen by the observation of a meeting two years after the start of the Senior Leadership Team initiative in the Royal Air Force. At this meeting, one new member, at his first meeting, clearly displayed sycophantic behaviour at the start of the day ensuring he was seen to be contributing to the meeting by the Chief of the Air Staff; he was 'grandstanding' to the audience (Jupp, 2010b: 62). Yet by the end of that meeting, twenty four hours later, in the plenary session there was no grandstanding and the

session worked well despite the presence of this officer (Jupp, 2010b: 64). The structure of the Team, the way it operated prevailed.

Most tellingly, when the Chief of the Air Staff retired and a new Chief took over, the new Chief, not unnaturally, imposed himself on his first meeting of the Senior Leadership Team with him 'in charge'. Yet the meeting managed to generate a good, open discussion (Jupp, 2010b: 89). This reinforced the earlier opinion of one of the junior members of the Senior Leadership Team when he said in an interview that:

'I don't get the feeling that you have to be careful what you said in [the Senior Leadership Team meetings]; I think it's a free exchange of views' (Interview Team member M).

The structure of the Team as a non- or less-hierarchical entity, with an informal dress code, and meetings away from the office atmosphere, seem to have had the desired effect. The support given to the members with the induction interview, meetings with the Chief of the Air Staff and periodic interviews with the members and the coaching offered will also have played their part. However, as always with people, things were not perfect:

'I think we are a reasonable team ... but there's more work we need to do because the more aligned and cooperative we are ... the more effective we are going to be' (Interview Team member B) and

'We're more of a team than we were ... it's still hit and miss ... the competition for promotion still gets in the way' (Interview Team member D).

There is always scope for improvement and a continual need to work on all aspects of bringing the Team together and getting it working in the way intended. With a team that is continually changing its membership as people retire from the organisation and younger ones are promoted into the team, as in the Royal Air Force, this need for continual effort is all the stronger.

Wageman et al (2008), in their consideration of the support, structure and coaching of a team, insist on the development of organic team norms; the team themselves must come up with them. In June 2007 the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team did just that. At that meeting, what the Team was for, what a successful outcome for the Team was and the expected behaviours for the Team were, were all debated. The latter were discussed under the title of the seven deadly sins for the Team and their ten commandments, and were distilled into the last part of the Team manifesto drawn up from the discussions and circulated by the Chief of the Air Staff (Torpy, 2007). These norms were retained by the Team on the accession of the new Chief of the Air Staff and reaffirmed by the team in 2011 (Jupp, 2010a). Some thought that they were observed in the breach (Jupp, 2008a: 7), at least in the early life of the Team, yet they endured as an important part of the structure of the Team.

Additionally, Wageman et al show the need for 'coaching' of the Team. They use the word 'coaching' not in its more formal sense of 'executive coaching' but as in a sense of one-to-one support from the leader of the team. For the small, decision-making team that they mostly discuss, this is a practical proposition for the leader of the team to coach all its members; for a large consultative/informational team, such as

the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team, it is not. Nevertheless, the aspect of the need for one-on-one nurturing of the Team was recognised by the Chief of the Air Staff (Jupp, 2007a: 136) and the Team were interviewed at the end of 2007 and the end of 2008 with this aspect partly in mind. Executive coaching was deliberately targeted at two officers whose behaviours were seen to be problematical. The Chief of the Air Staff also frequently called his air marshals individually into his office for informal chats to increase the communication between them.

A formal induction process was also instituted for all new members of the Senior Leadership Team with an interview by the head of the Royal Air Force Leadership Centre at which some coaching took place and formal executive coaching was offered, as it was to all existing members of the Team. Thus, despite the differing sizes and the problem that this makes for coaching the team, coaching (as in one-to-one support), in some form, is needed for large teams as it is for smaller ones. It is just the method for achieving this that differs.

The first meeting of the Senior Leadership Team in February 2007, was organised to try to increase interpersonal trust in the Team and to get the Team to work in a different way so that the Chief of the Air Staff could harness the expertise, knowledge and experience of all his air marshals (Jupp, 2007a: 61). It did not set out to break down the hierarchy though it did attempt to reduce the effects of it. From the second meeting of the Team in June 2007, when an external facilitator was brought in with experience of setting up a military senior leadership team in the Royal Australian Air Force (Mugford and Rogers, 2005), creating the Team to be less hierarchical came

on the agenda. For the first time at that meeting the dress for the meeting was casual civilian clothes so that the trappings of rank were left behind. The meetings were always held in places far from the offices of any of the members and, as with the first meeting, frank and open opinion was encouraged.

There is extensive evidence from the meeting in June 2007 of the intent to level the team from the small group discussions on what would destroy the initiative of the Senior Leadership Team. These noted that any attempt to use the formal Annual Confidential Reporting system, in which the performance and potential of all officers is measured, within the Team would successfully destroy the Team.

There was also a call to communicate and share knowledge better, and significant emphasis on several occasions on listening and learning, from the other groups (Jupp, 2007a: 55-9). The qualitative evidence of it happening is plentiful:

'there's a fairly free exchange. I don't get the feeling that you have to be careful what you said' (Interview Team member O).

is typical of many of the remarks on this aspect though there was also acknowledgement that some needed more help:

*'Some of the SLT were more comfortable with ... everybody's view being equal ... some tended to close down the debate saying this is my view, therefore that is **the** view'* (Interview Team member N).

There was also evidence of a softening of the hierarchy in the way more junior officers addressed those more senior to them in the meetings. The normal method of

addressing a more senior officer is to call him 'sir' or her 'ma'am', but as the meetings of the Team progressed there were occasions when first names were used (see for example Jupp, 2010b: 88). All these are good indicators that the Senior Leadership Team had become less hierarchical and there was evidence that the Team wanted to remain less bureaucratic with no formal written output (Jupp, 2007a: 58). On only three occasions during the period of observation were any notes made of the outcomes of any of the discussions.

Nevertheless, the tensions in the system were apparent to the Team:

'It's all very well coming together every three or four months and saying we're a team, all wearing civilian clothes and everybody's opinion is equal. But then the rest of the time we're in a hierarchical organisation where not everybody's views are treated equally. You've got a fundamental tension, a structural tension' (Interview Team member G).

The literature review noted that there would always be tensions between different parts of an organisation which had different cultures (Harrison, 1972). It would seem that the same people find similar tensions moving between two different cultures when working in the confines of the Senior Leadership Team and in their normal workplace in the full organisation. The question to answer is whether the tension is too much and will destroy the flat organisation and ensure a reversion to a homogenous culture (Handy, 1993).

The weight of evidence so far is against the systemic issue of the larger, stronger, longer lived culture of hierarchy suppressing the 'new' flatter culture of the

Senior Leadership Team. The final meetings observed at the end of 2009 were showing just as strong indications of a non- or less-hierarchical structure as any other of the earlier meetings (Jupp, 2010b). Furthermore, as this chapter is written some three years further on, the Senior Leadership Team is still operating as it had done. Longevity here must surely be the final arbiter and it currently rests with it being possible to sustain a flat structured team within a hierarchical organisation. It must be acknowledged that it may be too early to tell if there is a natural term to this.

The caveats to this must also be stated. First, the Team was not altogether flat. Whilst it demonstrated a flatter culture than an absolute hierarchy where complete deference would be given to those of higher rank, the underlying rank structure was never completely eradicated. It was just asked to be partially suspended so that full, free and frank discussions could be had without fear of prejudice and views of juniors being suppressed. Though it was not completely successful in this aim, not least with new members having to get used to the forum, the evidence is heavily in favour it being successfully maintained.

Secondly, as with all empirical evidence, which rests on the assumption that the future will always be like the past, the day could easily come when the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team is disbanded. The question at that time will be why? As one Team member said, *'there is no doubt in my mind about the need for a Senior Leadership Team'* (Interview Team member K) while another said *'the SLT will endure because CAS [the Chief of the Air Staff] is fully signed up to it'* (Interview Team member

R). If the Chief of the Air Staff does not want a Senior Leadership Team it will cease, for whatever reason. Strong leadership would be required to keep it going.

In summary, the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team had the administrative support it needed. It developed its own structure, with the help of an external facilitator, as it developed what it was that it did and how often it met. Starting from a position of dealing with the issues that power and hierarchy thrown up in a team designed for open and honest discussion, it moved to actively lowering the hierarchy. Although the Chief of the Air Staff saw his air marshals individually on a regular basis this was not regular enough to constitute 'coaching' as advocated by Wageman et al (2008). The support within the Team was strengthened as it developed with a formal induction process and interviews by facilitators being introduced as well as formal executive coaching being offered both generally and specifically. The structure, support and coaching necessary to sustain the Team were developed with the development of the Team, but it was also recognised that strong leadership would be needed.

5. Strong leadership.

At the start of the formation of the Senior Leadership Team, the Chief of the Air Staff insisted on the presence of all his air marshals including the one civilian equivalent, a civil servant working within the Royal Air Force structure. Considerable pressure was exerted and the vast majority of the 'Team' turned up. That pressure was continued, not least by the sentence in the Senior Leadership Team Manifesto

that '*SLT [Senior Leadership Team] work represents the highest priority for members*' (Torpy, 2007). The Chief of the Air Staff's wishes for his team were manifestly clear.

Equally well, the Chief of the Air Staff declared publically, in the final plenary session to the first meeting, that he had enjoyed working in that way. He also indicated that there would be more such meetings, something that had not yet been made plain to the assembled air marshals. He was providing the strong lead that was necessary for the Team to be created. The Chief continued to work closely with both the Head of the Royal Air Force Leadership Centre and the Head of Royal Air Force Transformation, one of the members of the newly created entity, who wanted to use the Team for Transformation purposes, to make sure that the Team was well founded (Jupp, 2007a). Out of these meetings an external facilitator was engaged, and with his input the work to form the new Team was put in place for the next meeting of the Team.

At this meeting, using various facilitation methods, what success looked like for the Team was discussed along with Team norms, what would destroy the Team, and what the Team should say about itself (Jupp, 2007a: 54-7). Once all the small group discussions had been fed back to the whole group and a plenary discussion had, the Chief of the Air Staff stood up and summarised his perception of what was wanted and gave clear guidance of how he saw the Senior Leadership Team, what he saw it was for and how it should work (Jupp, 2007a: 60-2). After the meeting, he summarised the notes from the various discussions into a document he called the Senior Leadership Team Manifesto (Torpy, 2007) and circulated it to all the members of the Team as well

as to their subordinates. Again, strong leadership was being shown for the formation of the Team.

Leading by example is a continuing need for the Team. After the meeting in June of 2007 where the true formation of the Team was set in train, as detailed above, the air marshals were asked to meet several times before the end of the year as part of the Transformation effort. This was packaged as part of the Senior Leadership Team for convenience. However, as it was Transformation work for the rest of the air marshals to do, the Chief of the Air Staff did not appear at these meetings. Despite the very clear intention from the Chief of the Air Staff in his Manifesto for the Team that Senior Leadership Team work was the highest priority, several other members of the Team also did not turn up. This considerably irritated more than one member of the Team. One of these commented in an interview that if his colleagues could not be trusted to fulfil that part of the Manifesto what other parts of the Manifesto could he trust them to be doing? (Jupp, 2008a: 7). Another member later commented:

‘the code of practice is really good but I do wonder if we are all fully bought into this’ (Interview Team member J).

While there is an issue as to the limit of leader’s power here, it is the leadership issue bound up with that that is important. It was clear that it was going to be counterproductive in the formation of the Team to try to hold meetings without the presence of the Chief of the Air Staff, clear leadership by example was necessary. This is an issue that has been recognised elsewhere (Wageman et al., 2008). Several

meetings of the Senior Leadership Team were cancelled or postponed when it became too difficult for the Chief of the Air Staff to attend for just this reason.

Moving to the issue of needing strong leadership to support the new culture of the Team, the flatter less hierarchical culture of the Team in the very hierarchical culture of the Royal Air Force, the following statement from an interview with a member of the Team used earlier reiterates:

'It's all very well coming together every three or four months and saying we're a team, all wear civilian clothes and everybody's opinion is equal. But the rest of the time we're in a hierarchical organisation where not everybody's views are treated equally. You've got a fundamental tension, a structural tension.'

(Interview Team member G)

The tension referred to may be amplified by this occurrence. At one office call by the researcher on a junior and new member of the Senior Leadership Team, that member was explaining an idea that had come to him of developing the Royal Air Force in a particularly radical way. When it was pointed out to the Air Vice Marshal that that idea may be a good one for the Senior Leadership Team to discuss in its deliberations on the strategy for the Royal Air Force, he stated *'that would be career suicide'* (Jupp, 2009a: 97). He clearly did not think that the senior leadership of the Team was up for frank, open and radical discussion.

There were others who echoed this view, though from a slightly different standpoint:

*'Some of the SLT were more comfortable with ... everybody's view being equal ... some tended to close down the debate by, you know, saying this is my view, therefore that's **the** view'* (Interview Team member N)

'I'm not sure we're yet good enough at really pulling an issue apart through open discussion where rank matters very little.' (Interview Team member N)

However, there were equally well others who considered that the Senior Leadership Team had achieved a culture where this was possible:

'There is a willingness to be quite frank and the amount of defensiveness has dropped away.' (Interview Team member F)

'[The Senior Leadership Team] is generating a willingness to listen and talk across the rank gradient' (Interview Team member U)

Cross referring to the quantitative data is also interesting. Here there was one question in the Senior Leadership Team questionnaire relating to this; question 6 which asked 'takes on board the views of juniors'. Figure 5 shows the results across the three iterations of the survey, the vertical scale showing part of a 5-point Likert scale from 1-strongly disagrees to 5-strongly agrees and 3 being neutral. Care must be taken with the results, however. The question is open to interpretation and was intended for everyone in the survey. Therefore, it could be interpreted as takes on board the views of those more junior to the Senior Leadership Team as well as, for the more senior in the Team, takes on board the views of the more junior members of the Team. Nevertheless, the indication is there that the members of the Team improved

over the life of the Team with regard to this quality, an improvement that backs up the qualitative data.

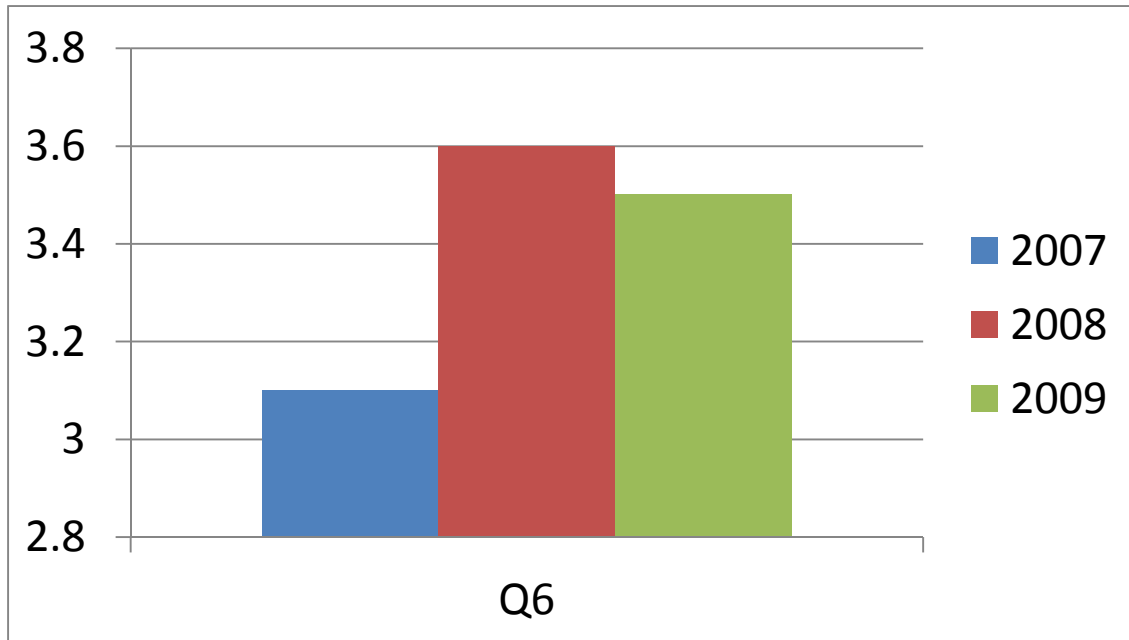


Figure 5 Equality of Opinions (From Elliott-Mabey, 2009)

One further piece of qualitative data is important here. One member of the Team noticed that while there were some

‘people who close down the debate because of the rank differential.

Interestingly, when CAS [the Chief of the Air Staff] left I sense that increased marginally’ (Interview Team member I).

Strong leadership, as well as facilitation, has an important part to play in creating and maintaining the new, less hierarchical culture in the Team if the presence of the leader has such an obvious effect on the new culture he is trying to inculcate.

The two occasions on which some of the more senior officers forced a change to the agenda, which has already been outlined above are also interesting in the consideration of leadership of the Team. There are important differences to the cases but in both cases it was an agenda item that the Chief of the Air Staff wanted to address that was abandoned. How should we, therefore, view the leadership shown by him in these instances?

The first instance, as described above, was caused by the loss of the Nimrod aircraft on operations over Afghanistan with its associated loss of seventeen lives (for details see Hadden-Cave, 2008). There was a real fear that the operational stretch in the Service could possibly lead to strategic failure. The urgency of this issue was increased when added to the financial stretch already articulated and the perceived imbalance of manpower that Royal Air Force Transformation was trying to address. Against this background, it was perhaps unsurprising that the Chief of the Air Staff and the other members of the Senior Leadership Team were effortlessly persuaded to change the agenda to discuss a more urgent, and arguably more important, issue. Though not all thought so:

'I think it was disappointing that we got hijacked on the last event into a capability health check.' (Interview Team member D)

On the second occasion, however, the situation was more complex. Despite the Chief of the Air Staff attempting to keep the agenda item going, the 'rebels' who did not want to discuss that item continued to force the issue. The Chief of the Air Staff held the line for a short while but allowed a new topic to be discussed as the

majority took the side of the 'rebels'. The difference to the first occasion when the agenda was changed was not the urgency of the new topic that forced the old one out, there was no new topic, it was the disenchantment with the agenda item and the way it was presented that was the problem.

Again, this shows that both the leader and the subordinate have to acquiesce in the use of power. It also follows Ward's (1639) animadversion that a general must use his power sparingly if he wishes to keep it. The question remains, though, was the Chief of the Air Staff, while judiciously using his power, showing strong leadership by allowing his agenda item to be supplanted?

The answer to this question is likely always to be a matter of opinion and perspective. However, the literature acknowledges that there is always going to be some limit as to the power of a leader to force people to do their bidding, even when the consequences for the followers are potentially very high. When the situation is one where the withdrawal of the followers' participation is both easy and not likely to have many consequences, the judgement of the leader as to how far to push the followers is important. Had the Chief of the Air Staff pushed his Team at this point to discuss the original agenda item regardless, it is easy to see that the discussion may not have been productive as the Team were not really interested in the subject (at least as it was presented). In its aftermath, the Team members may also have questioned the use of the Team itself. Certainly most members felt that the different discussion had was a more useful use of their time (Jupp, 2009a).

What is clear, and recorded, is that the Chief of the Air Staff was very concerned that the poor view of the meeting at which the agenda changed for the second time was not to be the start of the decline of the Senior Leadership Team. That meeting was in February 2009 and in the ensuing months, the Chief of the Air Staff met with the two facilitators three times to ensure that the next meeting was much more successful and viewed as such by the Team (Jupp, 2010b). That the next meeting, held in June 2009, was successful is shown by the comment of the Chief of the Air Staff's personal staff officer, the only other non-participating observer of the meetings, that it was the best meeting he had seen with very good engagement and behaviours.

Whatever view is taken of the leadership that allowed an agenda item to be supplanted in February 2009, it is clear that the Chief of the Air Staff showed strong leadership in the run-up to and the subsequent meeting to ensure the maintenance of the morale of the Team.

Wageman et al identify three elements in the leadership of the team: being able to diagnose the problems (including those that lead to the need for a team in the first place), being able to see through any charade of cooperation and dealing with the lack of trust and behaviours that lead to and reinforce that charade. The Chief of the Air Staff's ability to diagnose the need for a team is evidenced by the fact that he set it up. The previous paragraphs on the forced changes to the agenda also show that he was alert to problems brewing within the Team during the meetings and dealt with them.

The charade of cooperation showed itself in other ways. The comments:

'the competition for promotion still gets in the way' (Interview Team member D),

'the code of practice is really good but I do wonder if we are all fully bought into this' (Interview Team member J) and

'the air barons allowing ego occasionally to cause division between Groups'⁵
(Interview Team member N).

show that others in the Team felt that there definitely were some whose cooperation was, at least partially, a charade. That the Chief of the Air Staff was aware of this issue came out in the meetings between him and the Head of the Royal Air Force Leadership Centre (see for example Jupp, 2009a: 39). He also realised the need to continually work on the Team to get their genuine engagement with the process (See for example Jupp, 2008a: 184-5).

That the Chief of the Air Staff realised the need to generate trust within the Senior Leadership Team to deal with the problems of any charade of cooperation has plenty of evidence. The first meeting of the Team was set up to deal with the lack of trust and to start to build trust within the Team (Jupp, 2004b). The meeting used a mixture of a lecture on some academic issues on trust (from Hurley, 2006), a lecture on the importance of trust using military history from the First World War (Cox, 2007)

⁵ A Group is a significant subsection of the Air Command organisation commanded by an air vice marshal.

and a facilitated workshop using a method of working designed to increase trust (Gosling, 2006).

That there was an ongoing need to continue to develop trust in the Team can be seen from the interviews of its members about eighteen months to two years after the formation of the Team.

‘Cooperative as opposed to competitive [behaviours are required]; but that is going to be very difficult to achieve in the hierarchic environment where people are promoted on the basis of perception of their achievements’ (Interview Team member G).

‘There’s also, I think, a requirement to be a bit clearer that we’re working for the Air Force rather than for our Branch⁶ or our Group or our career’ (Interview Team member N).

The Chief of the Air Staff was alive to this need as well and this is shown by the fact that the Senior Leadership Team survey measured some indicators to trust within the Team (Elliott-Mabey, 2007) and in 2009 directly asked a question on trust (Elliott-Mabey, 2009). The outcomes of the Survey and behavioural issues over trust were debated at Senior Leadership Team meetings on more than one occasion (see for example Jupp, 2009a: 67-70, Jupp, 2010b: 62) to ensure that the need to develop trust was tackled head on. It was also a continuing issue for all meetings and can be seen to have been successful from the observations on at least two occasions (Jupp, 2009a: 78 and 133-5) where particularly poor behaviours between two specific members of the

⁶ A Branch is a specialisation, or group of specialisations, within the officer corps of the Royal Air Force.

Team were seen to have improved and consequently so had the quality of the debate between them. The constant engagement of the Chief of the Air Staff individually and collectively with the members of the Team and his strong leadership of it, tackling the trust issues and meeting head on any charade of cooperation was evident.

The new Chief of the Air Staff in 2009 also gave the Team the strong leadership it needed. At his first meeting, which was severely modified from its intended form of a three-day trip abroad to a two-day session in the classroom, there was considerable dissention in the Team as to its necessity, as has been reported above:

'moving from World War 3 to World War 1, just what we need right now; not!'
and *'Tactical Exercise Without Terrain'⁷ – pointless!* (Jupp, 2010b: 86). Both these remarks, which come from different members of the Team, were made using considerable sarcasm.

However, during the meeting the new Chief of the Air Staff had given clear direction to the Team which was welcomed (Jupp, 2010b: 90) and at least two members of the Team subsequently expressed how good they had felt the meeting to be (Jupp, 2010b: 91). The accession of the new Chief also caused a dip, if not a crisis, in the view of trust within the Team which his strong initial leadership alleviated (see the section on trust below).

⁷ A 'Tactical Exercise Without Troops' is an accepted method used by the British Army to war-game scenarios without excessive cost and pointless effort of large numbers of men. These are sometimes known as 'desktop exercises'.

That such a team as the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team requires leadership, and strong leadership, is evident from the analysis above. It was also evident to the members of the Team:

‘the SLT [Senior Leadership Team] will endure because of the desire at the highest level for this to persist’ (Interview Team member S).

If the Chief of the Air Staff did not want a Senior Leadership Team it would cease. His leadership is necessary for that reason alone. However, it is also true that his strong leadership is required both to ensure that the behaviours that he requires for the Team become the norm within the Team, such as those to promote the open and free discussion of all ideas without prejudice, as well as the less hierarchical ones promoting the equality of ideas expressed no matter who was expressing them or being opposed to them.

In summary on Wageman et al’s (2008) model for ‘great senior leadership teams’, the analysis of the data from the case study set out to confirm whether the model worked for the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team. The first two points of the model were confirmed by the data. The need for a team, both as seen by the leader of the team and by its members, was an important factor in the formation of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team. A clear purpose for the team was also needed and, as Wageman et al also found, was a difficult thing to establish for a large consultative and informational team.

The third criterion, the right composition, gave more of a problem. To reach every part of the complex organisation that Defence represents, those Royal Air Force

senior people in digital posts had to be included. Equally well, to ensure that all air marshals understood the intent of the Chief of the Air Staff, and the direction the Royal Air Force was taking under his leadership, all the air marshals also needed to be included. Finally, as part of the reason for the Team in the first place was to change behaviours, excluding poor behaviour, as advocated by Wageman et al, was not an option. To be able to generalise Wageman et al's model to the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team would need the third criterion of the right composition to be modified. Composition needs to be carefully considered and inclusion or exclusion used to form the sort of team that is required.

The problems that come with inclusion and large size, poor behaviours and the group size paradox (Esteban and Ray, 2001), must then be managed with facilitation and leadership. The data from the case study show that good facilitation methods and skilled facilitators, used along with good leadership can manage the behaviours imported to the team by including all possible members. Facilitation methods can also deal with the group size paradox.

The fourth criteria, the right structure, support and coaching also needs modifying to generalise the model to such a large team as the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team. The structure and support are important in the way indicated by Wageman et al. In particular the agenda needs constant attention. The coaching, in Wageman et al's use of the term, however, cannot be undertaken by the leader of the team alone. For such a large team, ranging from 32 to 34 members, the leader cannot undertake as much one-to-one attention as that required. By getting induction

interviews carried out by the facilitators and by the judicious use of executive coaching, the 'coaching' burden, which is necessary, can be accomplished.

The final point of the model, leadership, was shown to be necessary in the terms that Wageman et al indicate. It was also shown to be even more important in the case study because of the behavioural issues created by the use of inclusion in the third criterion.

The next section of this Chapter will examine in more depth the issues raised by the different culture required in the Team to that pertaining in the overall organisation.

5.2.2 Establishing an Egalitarian Culture in a Hierarchy

The review of the literature in Chapter 3 indicated that the requirements for establishing an egalitarian culture in a hierarchy were:

- a well formed team,
- leadership,
- great trust,
- a compelling reason for a different culture

The previous section of this Chapter went through the criteria needed to create a senior leadership team and indicated that the Royal Air Force had formed such a team, which, while not perfect, was well formed. Part of the requirement to form the

Team was strong leadership which was also demonstrated. This section of the Chapter will bear in mind these two factors and their effect on creating a new culture within the Team but will discuss at greater length the remaining two requirements: trust and a compelling reason.

Taking first the compelling reason for a different culture, it is necessary to look at the effect of power on the Team. It has been noted above that power was at play within the Senior Leadership Team and occasionally had a deleterious effect on discussions. The issue of power, and its place in a hierarchy, needs careful examination.

5.2.2.1 Power

Power, and the exercise of power, can always have an adverse effect on a group of people. The ambitious are likely to use its presence to enhance their own standing and, by being perceived to be of better standing to their peers, so enhance their prospects of promotion. This can be done with subtlety which can include working well within a team to start with (Jaques, 1990) yet it is likely to infuriate the other members of a team when it does come to light.

Power is best considered as part of a relationship between people (Grint, 1995, Bratton et al., 2005) and when it is used or exercised it will always affect that relationship; whether in the positive or negative would have to be judged on each occasion. Using power against the will of the follower, or using position power (Handy, 1993) to coerce, has long been known to create an adverse effect on the relationship between the leader and follower (Ward, 1639, Watters, 2004). While in extremis the

effect can be a complete breakdown of the relationship between leader and follower, such as in the trenches of World War 1 (Grint, 1995, Grint, 2005). At the very least, the trust between the two will decline (Hurley, 2006).

The Royal Air Force is a hierarchical organisation with many layers which are made visible and real by the wearing of rank. The Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team has the top three of those rank levels within it and thus exhibits all the facets of position power (Handy, 1993). Moreover, although the two most senior people in the Service are of the same rank, the Chief of the Air Staff and the Commander-in-Chief both being Air Chief Marshals, the strict conventions followed within the Service acknowledges that the Chief of the Air Staff is the more 'senior' officer and out ranks the Commander-in-Chief. In reality then there are four hierarchical levels with considerable and ostensible position power attached. They also have legitimate power (French and Raven, 1959a, Bratton et al., 2005) or formal power (Mintzberg, 1983). The situation is made more complicated as two of the most junior of the Senior Leadership Team, two air vice marshals, are also members of the Air Force Board by right of the appointment they hold rather than their rank. These two, therefore, wield additional position power or perhaps referent power (Bratton et al., 2005).

The understanding of the power distribution amongst the Senior Leadership Team is further complicated as not all the air vice marshals or air marshals within the Team can be promoted further. Some, because of their specialisation, will have reached the pinnacle of their career at air vice marshal rank, such as the senior lawyer, medical officer and padre. There are few opportunities for other specialisations such

as the administrators and engineers to be promoted beyond air vice marshal.

Moreover, some of the aircrew, the one specialisation that can be promoted to be Chief of the Air Staff, will have a limit to their promotion prospects as the Royal Air Force maintains a strict retirement age. This creates a small pool of officers within the Senior Leadership Team that have the opportunity to be selected for the highest rank.

These officers tend to have more referent power (Bratton et al., 2005) or personal power (Handy, 1993) by dint of their potential (they may one day hold much greater position power over their Team peers) and access to the current Chief of the Air Staff and Commander-in-Chief. Finally, while all of the members of the Senior Leadership Team had some degree of expert power (Bratton et al., 2005) from their specialisation and previous experience, at the time the Team was formed, some of the more junior members had a greater degree of trust from the most senior members and thus had a greater degree of referent power (Bratton et al., 2005). This last stemmed not from their current position but more from previous association and knowledge of each other from earlier periods of their career when their paths had crossed.

The converse of this additional power was also true as some officers whose early career had been in the same part of the organisation just 'did not get on' as the phrase has it. This issue was exacerbated by the fact that although all the members of the Senior Leadership Team knew of each other and had been in the Royal Air Force together for many years, normally at least twenty five, many, surprisingly, did not know each other personally or well (Jupp, 2007a: 181). The Royal Air Force being a

reasonably large, but also a very diverse, organisation that is very much differentiated into separate silos at a junior level.

Aircrew careers are based around a particular aircraft type and role and it is rare for them to be transferred to another type or role. Thus they form networks that are primarily based within those that also fly that aircraft type. Engineers also frequently find themselves concentrating in their early career on a particular aircraft type. The Service tends to be quite insular in its socialising, with its personnel considering their allegiances by training background; that is administrators stick with administrators and so forth (see Kirke, 2012). Only later in careers do different specialties tend to mix more freely and friendship groups remain dominated by people from the same training background.

This tendency to cliques is reinforced by professional rivalry and by the banter that stems from this. Banter that not infrequently passes the boundary from banter into unfriendly exchanges (Kirke, 2012) causing alienation, which is reinforced by the use of specialist language and acronyms often deliberately used to form an exclusive boundary (Grint, 1995). This sort of extreme alienation occasionally surfaces later in their careers. For example, at a meeting of group captains from all specialisations within the Strategic Leadership Development Programme in March 2011 such alienation was apparent. This is a programme designed to prepare those who may be promoted into the Senior Leadership Team for strategic leadership challenges.

At this meeting, one of those present, who worked in the area of the Ministry of Defence that allocated resources between the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air

Force, appealed to all present to support the case for no further reductions in the size of the fast jet fleet as he considered that it was very vulnerable to excessive cuts that would reduce capability below what he considered necessary for commitments. His case was that the need for helicopters was well understood by non-Royal Air Force people in the Ministry of Defence but that for fast jets was not. He himself was from the fast jet fraternity. One of the group captains present, who had a helicopter background, responded vigorously and negatively, justifying himself afterwards privately by saying that it was about time the fast jet fraternity suffered a bit as they had lorded it over the helicopter people for years (Jupp, 2010a: 47). The silos created by the long-term association with a specialisation, and the emotion generated by the professional rivalry and banter, run deep.

Returning to the Senior Leadership Team, all the different sources or bases of power: position, expert, referent, and legitimate, must have had and continue to have an effect on the relationships within the Senior Leadership Team and the formation of the Team itself. Yet the source of power is only a true source of power if the recipient of the exercise of power, not the owner of the source, believes it to be (Handy, 1993). In different words, power is a relationship, and both parties to the relationship must acquiesce in the use of power (Bratton et al., 2005, Grint, 2005).

Those members of the Senior Leadership Team that were at the pinnacle of their career and knew that they were not going to be promoted further would have had less reason to curry the favour of those most senior who would otherwise promote them. Nevertheless, all were sufficiently their own person not always to be

meekly subservient to the views of their seniors, yet all well schooled in the formalities of the Service where higher rank is deferred to. Following on from this, there was still plenty of evidence of personal power being used to enhance the position of a person (Jaques, 1990), for example one member of the Senior Leadership Team said: *'The competition I sense for promotion still gets in the way [of team-working]'* (Interview Team member D) emphasising the continual jockeying for position that those who believed of themselves that they could be promoted further indulged in. It also emphasises the need for the Senior Leadership Team to acquire a different culture.

The office call on a junior member of the Senior Leadership Team mentioned earlier, where he was explaining an idea that had come to him of developing the Royal Air Force in a particularly radical way, is also pertinent here. His comment that it *'would be career suicide'* (Jupp, 2009a: 97) to put forward the idea in the forum of the Senior Leadership Team meetings is evidence that he, at least, was considering the implications on his career; a career that could go further in rank because of his age and specialisation. He was obviously less interested in the stated aims of the Team. Power was not being actively exercised here as those with power were not present but radical ideas were being suppressed in case they did not meet with the approval of the more senior officers who would promote his career. Again, the culture within the Team would have to change, and this member become comfortable with the different culture, for the full benefits of a consultative team to be realised.

With the deleterious issues of power clear within the Team, it was important that the meetings of the Team were facilitated in such a way as to minimise the effects

of power to gain the most from the Team. The first meeting of the Team was organised for the discussion part of the meeting to follow the Exeter Friendly Consulting method (Gosling, 2006). This broke the group of some twenty four members of the Team into three groups of eight. Each group worked in a separate room. Within each group, a member of the Team would present a real problem from their work area to the group, using a flip chart to draw pictures to enhance their words, and then had to sit with their back to the group to listen to the deliberations. The groups were deliberately chosen to ensure that the most senior officers were not in the same group, diluting the hierarchical or position power issues. Officers who reported directly to one of the more senior officers were in different groups. Finally, those officers who had more referent power because of the trust reposed in them by certain more senior officers were not put in the same group as that senior officer.

It is clear that this had worked to a degree as one of the two most senior officers there said that he thought the method had engendered more useful discussions. The Chief of the Air Staff declared publically, in the final plenary session to the meeting, that he had enjoyed working in that way. However, from the remark above about career suicide, which came some time after this meeting, it is clear that it was not completely effective. The meeting had been held in uniform with the ostensible signs of rank plain on all attendees' shoulders. To try to further reduce the effect of power, subsequent meetings were held out of uniform in informal clothes.

Though all the members of the Senior Leadership Team knew each other, and were in no doubt about who was who and what rank they were, it was felt that to

work in informal clothes in an informal setting would engender a more relaxed atmosphere and would help to generate the open discussions desired rather than the more formal agreement with higher rank that had been sometimes evident. For example one member stated:

'There is a group thing based on groupthink formed on what CAS [Chief of the Air Staff] thinks' (Interview Team member J) and another

'[sometimes I see] far less cooperative behaviour, pre-conceptions and prejudice' (Interview Team member U).

This is reinforced by the researcher's observation of a meeting when the Chief of the Air Staff opened a discussion and many of the air vice marshals present just agreed with him and backed up the points he made (Jupp, 2008a: 186). Yet the informal dress was acknowledged to assist open debate, one interviewee stating: *'Taking away formality helps [create a good discussion]'* (Interview Team member C).

At subsequent meetings, different methods were used to help ameliorate the passive effects of position power. For example, at the next meeting (and some subsequent ones) a 'card game' was used where the Team members were asked to write the outcome to a specific question on a card. The cards were then swapped randomly between them as they milled around to disguise the originator. Then, in pairs, they were asked to score the outcome on the two cards they held. After a few rounds of this, the scores on the cards were totted up and the three most popular were then used for further discussion. At other meetings, the most senior officers

were asked to hold back with their opinions to prevent possible sycophants aligning their views with those of the most powerful.

The world cafe method (Brown and Isaacs, 2005) was used extensively, where small tables were set up in the room and the large Team split up between the tables so that chains of command and referent power chains were not present on the same table. The method also calls for the groups at each table to be mixed randomly during the discussions so that different groups are formed to ensure that ideas are exposed to the widest possible number of people within the Team and all team members get to express their views on each question as every table addressed a slightly different question.

The practice of holding the meetings in informal clothes, the use of the card game and the world cafe facilitation to reduce the use and effects of position power was never intended to be one that would eradicate the issues of power. It was done to ameliorate them. It was always intended that building the Team and becoming used to the way the meetings were held would also reduce the effects further. It was intended that the culture of the Team would be built like this through the leadership and facilitation, and that the trust generated within the Team would support the new culture. It did.

Two years after the start of the Senior Leadership Team initiative in the Royal Air Force, one new member, at his first meeting, clearly displayed sycophantic behaviour ensuring he was seen to be contributing to the meeting by the Chief of the Air Staff at the start of the day (Jupp, 2010b: 62). Yet by the end of that meeting,

twenty four hours later, in the plenary session there was no grandstanding and the session worked well even though the new member was still attending (Jupp, 2010b: 64).

The tempting conclusion is that the officer had seen the way the meetings were conducted and quickly fallen into line with the prevailing behaviour. It is unlikely that such a simple conclusion could be drawn from just one instance or that behaviour would change in the space of one meeting. However, where the plenary sessions had been more problematic at the beginning of the process of forming the Senior Leadership Team (See for example: Jupp, 2008a: 146, Jupp, 2009a:78), towards the end of the period of research they were certainly less so, the example above of a good plenary session was not an isolated one (for example Jupp, 2009a: 136).

Most tellingly, when the Chief of the Air Staff retired and a new Chief took over he, not unnaturally, imposed himself on his first meeting of the Senior Leadership Team with him 'in charge'. This imposition of leadership or power did not detract from the intention of the meeting as a good, open discussion still ensued (Jupp, 2010b: 89). This reinforced the earlier opinion of one of the junior members of the Senior Leadership Team when he said in an interview that:

'Everybody challenges everyone else, regardless of their rank or position'

(Interview Team member Q).

Furthermore, on two occasions some of the more senior officers forced a change to the agenda. The first occasion was in September 2008 (Jupp, 2009a: 77) and the second in February 2009 (Jupp, 2009a: 178-179) as detailed above. These

instances are more difficult to interpret as, although it is clear that they were using their power to change the agenda, in both cases it was an agenda item that the Chief of the Air Staff wanted to address that was abandoned. As stated previously, on the first occasion it was the immediate urgency of a possible single risk happening that would create a strategic failure which easily pushed the longer-term strategic issue out. The Chief of the Air Staff and most of the rest of the Team were content to follow the new agenda. It was less an issue of power but more one of importance and urgency, though not all the Team agreed.

On the second occasion, however, the situation was more complex. A combination of poorly targeted presentation, too tactical an approach to the subject and an attempt at forcing a *fait accompli* meant that most in the Team did not want to discuss the issues. Despite the attempts of the Chief of the Air Staff and one other air marshal to keep the discussion on the original agenda item going, the more vociferous senior members persisted in their objections. The majority of the rest of the members of the Team present clearly sided with those against continuing the discussions and so the Chief of the Air Staff bowed to the pressure and allowed a new topic to be discussed.

It was not a new, urgent issue that forced its way onto the agenda but a disinclination to discuss the original agenda. The purpose of the Team began to be called into question which made the Chief of the Air Staff bow to the pressure to change the discussion to keep the Team together. In neither case could facilitation, nor facilitators and leader, change the course of events. Good leadership of the Team

was necessary to deal with the events. While facilitation is necessary to deal with the issues rising out of power in large teams, it not always sufficient to do so and leadership is also needed.

Other aspects of the use of power manifest in different ways. At one meeting, one member of the Senior Leadership Team was presenting some ideas. The arguments for and against those ideas by the rest of the Team was being held in plenary session. At that session, some of the arguments became *ad hominem* and the Team member presenting, not unnaturally, became very defensive (Jupp, 2008a: 145). The external facilitator stopped proceedings at that point to direct the attention of those present to what was happening on a personal level rather than intellectual one. The *ad hominem* arguments stopped and the session was able to move forward again on the intellectual level.

However, the effect on the member who had been presenting ideas was obviously long lasting. At a subsequent meeting he remarked that he wondered why he always felt as if he was going on trial when he had to stand up in front of the Senior Leadership Team (Jupp, 2010b: 91). He had certainly not regained his trust (had he had much trust in the first place) in his colleagues not to use *ad hominem* arguments and felt the intellectual ones were still directed at him personally. For this member at least there was a long way to go to build trust between Team members because of a misuse of power. Again, facilitation is very necessary to deal with these issues when they arise, but it has clear limitations. Facilitation can stop the insidious creep towards

ad hominem argument but it cannot undo the damage that, even a little, such argument does.

This behavioural change is perhaps the most powerful indication that good facilitation plays an important part in creating the conditions within a large, inclusive team for participation by all and in dealing with ingrained behaviours. The realisation of the two members of the Team who had been feuding so badly prior to the formation of the Team that they would almost always disagree with each other on principle, that they would have to change to remain in the Team is vital. Between eighteen months and two years into the process these two were showing signs of rapprochement between themselves because the facilitation allowed them to have a constructive dialogue (Jupp, 2009a: 78 and 135). Of course, strong leadership is also necessary as was shown by the meeting at which this issue was confronted directly (Jupp, 2007a: 135). The improvement in behaviours was noticed by the members of the Team, for example:

‘we’re moving in a better direction with better ways of behaving to one another than we would have done otherwise’ (Interview Team member C).

5.2.2.2 Homogeneity and Heterogeneity

The issue of team homogeneity and heterogeneity needs to be examined here as well, as facilitation is necessary to get the best from the Team in the light of these aspects. Heterogeneity comes in many forms and many studies use different definitions of heterogeneity for their purposes. Here what heterogeneity exists in the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team can only be described as job related. The

Team consists of around thirty four males of similar ages generally between 45 and 55. All were British of white ethnicity. All had had a long career in the Royal Air Force. Some may take this as being just about as homogenous as a large team can get. However, following Naranjo-Gil et al's differentiation of job- and non-job related heterogeneity and the usefulness of the latter (Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008: 231), it must be noted that the Team consisted of some 22 aircrew, 7 engineers, one Royal Air Force Regiment officer, one administrator, one doctor, one lawyer, one padre and one Civil Service member (Ross, 2009). Among the aircrew, most were pilots with two navigators and there was a mix of fast jet, helicopter and large aircraft backgrounds. Education of the Team also varied, some did not have degrees and for those that did, subject matter varied from engineering to physics, divinity and geography, though engineering and science predominated. Members of the Team commented upon the diversity in the Team:

'Although we all came from the same mould ... and we've been groomed to be very much like each other, there are a lots of different people, different views and different character styles' (Interview Team member A) and

'we are such an interesting mix of background, skill sets, educational levels, leadership qualities' (Interview Team member I).

This sums up both the homogeneous and heterogeneous nature of the Team. The question remains as to what effect this homogeneity and heterogeneity may have on a large informational and consultation-type team. The willingness of the Team to

engage in debate is evidenced on all occasions that they met and gives an indication of the job-related heterogeneity working in their favour.

One incidence perhaps epitomises this. At an early meeting one subject discussed was the introduction of a booklet to the Service as a whole on the core values and standards of the Royal Air Force. The discussion was introduced as one to look at how to introduce the booklet not a discussion on its contents. However, the discussion quickly moved to that of the content of the booklet as some felt that it was not put together as well as it might be. Many different ideas of how the booklet should look were expressed (Jupp, 2007a: 130). Diversity of ideas was not at a premium. This was replicated at many other debates such as one in December of 2008 on strategy for the Royal Air Force (Jupp, 2009a: 132 et seq). The meetings where the agenda was changed, detailed above, are also evidence of the effect of sufficient job-related heterogeneity being an important issue for teams. This seems to be true in the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team even in the difficult, ambiguous space of strategic discussions, contrary to some research (Handy, 1993). The facilitation method most used in the Team – the World Cafe – allowed all the ideas on a subject to be brought out.

By contrast, the discussion about the introduction of the booklet on core values and standards of the Royal Air Force was started to look for a solution or singular outcome but did not get one. Both the size and diversity of the Team prevented a decision in this regard, instead generating a discussion on an aspect of the subject that was not being asked for. This is very strong confirmation of the fact that decision

making in large groups is very difficult (Wageman et al., 2008, Sheard et al., 2009, Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2009) even with good facilitation. As one member said *'we're never going to convince everybody on all these issues'* (Interview Team member D). The fact that the Senior Leadership Team was not there to make decisions means that this handicap was not usually an issue for the Team, as that member went on to say *'the question of differences is important'*.

It must be acknowledged though that facilitation is not the perfect solution. As with all things to do with human behaviour, things do not always turn out as predicted or desired. For some members, discussion still seemed to be dominated by the wishes and desires of a powerful minority:

'for example that we ... ended up effectively just talking about [an aspect of air power] because that's what [X] wants to talk about' (Interview Team member G).

Nevertheless, for the majority of the time the facilitation was successful, as is shown by both the qualitative and quantitative evidence. The following three quotes indicate the success of the facilitation in this regard, while Figure 6 below gives the quantitative evidence.

'There is a healthy degree of openness and honesty [that] I appreciate ... and there is good humour as well' (Interview Team member F), and:

'being able to broach difficult subjects because you've done that [building trust]' (Interview Team member B), as well as:

'The SLT has created ... the free and open debate that we have' (Interview Team member L).

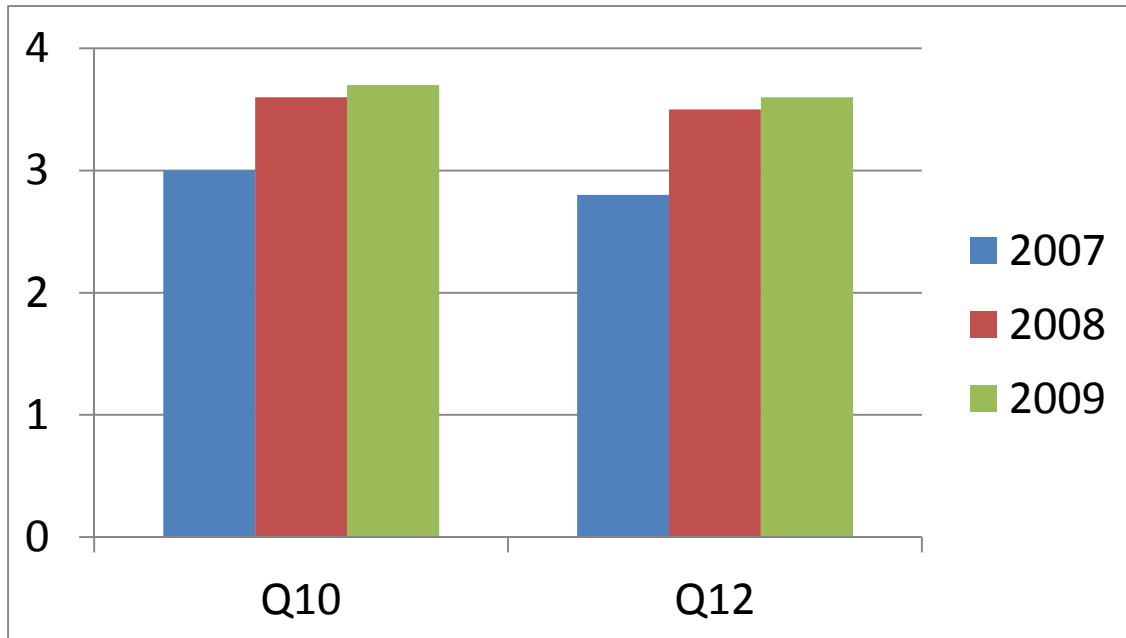


Figure 6 Collaborative Behaviour (From Elliott-Mabey, 2009)

In Figure 6, the vertical axis is part of a 5-point Likert scale running from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree and 3 being neutral. Question 10 is 'openly communicates inside the Team' and question 12 'works as a Team'. Both of these show improvement over the life of the Team. They confirm the qualitative evidence from the interviews and observation that the meetings of the Team brought the members together, dealt with the difficult behaviours, and allowed open discussion that all could participate in, as the scores after both one and two years increase into good, positive territory. That they are not sitting at the maximum also indicates that there will be those who have less than positive feelings about the issue – correlating with the less than positive interview data – but the majority sit in positive mood.

In summary, when inclusion is more important than exclusion in the membership of a team, ie for large informational or consultation teams, then facilitation is necessary to make the team work. It is not a complete answer, strong leadership is also necessary and between them they are not always guaranteed to be successful. However, without facilitation and leadership the issues of power, size and heterogeneity would overwhelm a large team. When creating large teams, careful consideration needs to be given to the facilitation necessary to make the team work.

5.2.2.3 Trust

The first meeting of the Team was set up to deal with the lack of trust and to start to build trust within the Team (Jupp, 2004b) using a mixture of a lecture on some academic issues on trust (from Hurley, 2006), a lecture on the importance of trust using military history from the First World War (Cox, 2007) and a facilitated workshop using a method of working designed to increase trust (Gosling, 2006). The Senior Leadership Team survey measured some indicators to trust within the Team (Elliott-Mabey, 2007) and in 2009 directly asked a question on trust (Elliott-Mabey, 2009).

The outcomes of the Survey and behavioural issues over trust were debated at Senior Leadership Team meetings on more than one occasion (see for example Jupp, 2009a: 67-70, Jupp, 2010b: 62). That tackling the issues was successful can also be seen from the observations on at least two occasions (Jupp, 2009a: 78 and 133-5) where poor behaviours between two members of the Team were seen to have improved. Improving the behaviours improved the quality of the debate between them. The constant engagement of the Chief of the Air Staff individually and

collectively with the members of the Team and his strong leadership of it, tackling the trust issues and meeting head on any charade of cooperation was successful and necessary in the gestation of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team.

The use of power always has an effect on interpersonal trust within a team (Hurley, 2006). Ward's (1639) animadversion to generals to use power sparingly or lose it is an indication that trust will break down between those who 'have' power and those who don't if that power is exercised either inappropriately or just simply over exercised without reason. Hurley (2006) expresses this another way, for him, the possession of power, or the possession of a source of power that another does not have, gets in the way of building trust between those two people. The subordinate, in the sense of the possessor of power being superior to the one who lacks it, will always be wary of trusting the superior because of the threat of the use of that power. The superior must show that the power is rarely used and when it is, it is used benevolently. The conclusion from Hurley's work must be that any use of power is likely to have a detrimental effect on the trust between the parties in the power relationship unless the trust is already absolute that the power will always be used benevolently in the future.

The deleterious effect of the use of power within the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team is not hard to observe. At the start of the formation of the Team, the Chief of the Air Staff insisted on the presence of all his air marshals including the one civilian equivalent, a civil servant working within the Royal Air Force structure. Considerable pressure was exerted and the vast majority of the 'Team' turned up.

That pressure was continued, not least by the sentence in the Senior Leadership Team Manifesto that '*SLT [Senior Leadership Team] work represents the highest priority for members*' (Torpy, 2007). The Chief of the Air Staff's wishes for his team were manifestly clear.

However, what was also clear was that the implied threat needed the power of the Chief of the Air Staff behind it. As detailed above, in the latter part of 2007, the first year of the Senior Leadership Team, the Team was asked to meet to address issues within the Royal Air Force's Transformation programme without the presence of the Chief of the Air Staff, attendance quickly dropped off. The effect of this on one member of the Team was to create significant irritation with his peers. He openly spoke in an interview (Jupp, 2008a: 7) about his frustration with his colleagues not acting in the way the Senior Leadership Team Manifesto required. He had made the effort to turn up. If he could not rely on his fellow members to follow one part of the Manifesto, how could he expect them to follow the rest of it? His trust in his colleagues was damaged by these events.

This series of events is interesting as it is not the Chief of the Air Staff exercising his power that caused the irritation but where that power broke down and failed to deliver the level of attendance expected by at least one member of the Team. It is not an excessive use of power that is causing difficulties with interpersonal trust. The point is that if the effect of the use of power is not seen to be uniform amongst those that are supposed to bend to the power, then the inequalities will affect the trust between those people. In relation to the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team,

what was clear was that it was going to be counterproductive in the formation of the Team to try to hold meetings without the presence of the Chief of the Air Staff, an issue that has been recognised elsewhere (Wageman et al., 2008). Several meetings were cancelled or postponed when it became too difficult for the Chief of the Air Staff to attend for just this reason.

Other aspects of the use of power manifest in different ways, such as the use of ad hominem argument. When these occurred at one meeting, the Team member presenting, not unnaturally, became very defensive (Jupp, 2008a: 145) as has been mentioned above. Despite the facilitator stopping proceedings and preventing further ad hominem argument, whatever trust the speaker had had in his fellow Team members was destroyed. He subsequently said that he felt as if he was going on trial when he presented to the Team.

The meeting at which he remarked that he always felt as if he was going on trial occurred just after the third of the Senior Leadership Team questionnaires had been completed in the summer of 2009, some two years after the formation of the Team. The good evidence in that questionnaire on the level of trust between Team members conflicts with other data. In that survey, only 60% of the Team answered positively to the question 'does the Team trust one another?' a reasonable level of trust and a significant level of mistrust. After the meeting where these results were exposed to the Team, one new member of the Team commented that had he had the chance to have attended a meeting before answering the questionnaire he would have given an

increased score to the trust question (Jupp, 2010b: 91). This view is borne out by an earlier interview with another member of the Team:

'when I looked up as a one star I just saw a bunch of individuals working in their own stove pipes in their own areas talking to each other where they were mates and stabbing [each other in the back] where they weren't ... I think we're far removed from that now, clearly it's not perfect' (Interview Team member A).

Although this comment was one supporting the efficacy of the Team in improving behaviour, it could also be reflecting the familiarity effect that becoming a member of the Team and getting to know his fellow air marshals, ie reducing the distance between them, had. Since, without the Senior Leadership Team, there was considerable distance between the air marshals, it is likely that reducing that distance is a significant factor in increasing the trust between them. A factor recognised by one of the Team *'Increased social interaction makes us more comfortable [with one another].'* (Interview Team member S).

The quantitative evidence bears this out as the reference group of officers one and two ranks below the Senior Leadership Team, the air commodores and group captains, who answered the same questionnaire, only 7.7% answered that question positively (Elliott-Mabey, 2009). This would indicate that those nearest in rank to the Senior Leadership Team had a very cynical view of the trust existing between them. New members of the Team who come from these ranks therefore are likely to be very wary initially on the trust issue and significantly underscore interpersonal trust until they are settled in the team. Since there were other new members of the Team

present at that meeting in the same position as the one who commented above that he would have scored the questionnaire more highly, this would reinforce the conclusion that the 60% score was lower than it would otherwise have been if all members were experienced. Additionally, there is the uncertainty that the Team would experience with the change of leader that is also likely to depress the score on trust, though this is an unknown quantity.

It is clear from this evidence that distrust between members of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team existed to a considerable extent – the 40% who scored this question negatively or neutrally. The reasons for the difference between the Team's own declaration of how much they trust each other and the perception of the trust between them by their subordinates demands consideration. On the one hand a score of 60% indicates reasonable trust exists between the Royal Air Force Senior Leaders. Though any complacency that a 60% score is good enough should be guarded against as it still means that a significant proportion do not trust each other.

However, the perception of subordinates of the trust between the members of the Team is not in the same league at all. They give a very firm indication that there is little or no trust between the members of the Team. First, do subordinates experience and perceive the power of superiors in a different way to the experience and perception of the power of peers? The relationship between peers and between a superior and a subordinate is different; as power is a relationship (Bratton et al., 2005) then the experience of power will be different in the two different pairings. The Institute of Leadership and Management survey of trust (Pardey, 2010) notes that the

critical factor in determining the level of trust in the CEO is the number of people in the organisation; the greater the number of employees the lower the trust is in the CEO.

This phenomenon crosses into the measurement of morale in the Services. When asked to rate their own morale, their immediate team's morale and progressively larger, and more remote, sections of the Service, the score given is progressively lower (DCDS(Pers), 2010). The conclusion to be drawn is that the more remote a person is the less that person will be trusted. This accords with Collinson's findings that distance can emphasise the asymmetry in a superior's and subordinate's power (2005: 243) and Hurley's (2006) assertion that an emphasis on power differential can destroy trust.

Relating this to the survey result that showed that those one and two ranks below the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team considered that there was little or no trust between its members (the 7.7% result in the Senior Leadership Team Questionnaire (Elliott-Mabey, 2009)) it is likely that their own lack of trust of more remote leaders, those not in their own immediate chain of command, is, at least to a certain extent, projected onto their perception of the trust their own leader has in his peers. That is, there is a systemic reason for there being a lower level of trust perceived between members of the Senior Leadership Team by subordinates than by members of the Team.

The same systemic reason will impact on the subordinates' perception on a more remote leader's benevolent use of power. The more remote the leader, the less

benevolent his use of power is likely to be perceived. Following Hurley (2006), much greater effort would need to be made to generate trust between subordinates and their more remote superiors than would be the case with superiors in their own chain of command with whom the subordinates were more familiar. The more remote leaders would have to show that their power was used benevolently in the case of subordinates where there was little opportunity to do this. Thus the remoteness factor will have a double whammy on the level of trust – an outcome of Collinson's assertion that power reinforces distance and distance reproduces power asymmetries (2005: 243).

However, the Institute of Leadership and Management survey results on the level of trust in CEOs (Pardey, 2010) is at odds with the Senior Leadership Team survey giving the military overall a 66% score of trust in their 'CEO'. While the surveys are measuring different things – the one trust **in** the top man, the other trust **between** the top men – there should be some correlation as it is not rational to have a high level of trust in someone and yet believe that others do not have trust in that person. Further research would be needed to resolve this issue. For the purposes of this thesis it should be noted that the Institute of Leadership and Management survey used a model of trust asking indirect questions to build a picture of the level of trust (Pardey, 2010) while the Senior Leadership Team survey asked a direct question on trust. It is also not clear what was meant by 'CEO' in the military context, if it equated to the Chief of the Air Staff or the Commander in Chief, then it would relate to someone in the direct chain of command who could be considered by the respondent considerably

differently to someone outside the chain of command. Suffice it to say that considerable further research would be necessary to resolve these questions.

The remoteness issues discussed above will have a greater effect on those just below the level of the Senior Leadership Team as members of the Team not in the direct chain of command will sit on the promotion boards of these people having a great and direct effect on their future while not having much of a chance to demonstrate their 'benevolence'. It is implausible that the remoteness factor described above is the only reason for the large disparity that subordinates of the Senior Leadership Team and its members had in the perception of the trust among the Senior Leadership Team despite its double whammy effect. There must also be some perception of the less than benevolent use of power by some Senior Leadership Team members against others that is supported by the behaviour of Team members with their subordinates.

Some Senior Leadership Team members must support, or at least not counter, their immediate subordinates' perception that other members are using their power against, or not in the best interest of, that Team member. The evidence for this comes from within the Team itself, for example:

'[back] stabbing and bad behaviours when they weren't [mates]' (Interview Team member A). Or: *'The air barons allowing ego to cause divisions between Groups'* (Interview Team member N), or again: *'the usual suspects using the occasion to further their own ambition'* (Jupp, 2008a: 146).

These three quotes among others show that the members of the Senior Leadership Team believe that various forms of power are being used to further a member's own cause at the expense of others.

It is inevitable that these views, if only in a milder form, were known by those subordinates with whom the particular members work most closely. This is demonstrated by the fact that a serious antipathy that existed between two members and was thought by those members to be something between themselves yet was actually widely known by their respective staffs (Jupp, 2007a: 73). Such views to the perceived misuse of power by a Team member would become part of the gossip, the rumour mill, within the workplace and be known in some form or other to those answering the Senior Leadership Team survey. Unless actively and consistently countered by Senior Leadership Team members, this gossip on the selfish use of power would impact negatively on perceptions of trustworthiness of the Team members involved and thus on the level of trust subordinates perceived between Team members.

In the generation of trust the issues of team homogeneity and heterogeneity need to be examined further. Heterogeneity comes in many forms as stated above and noted in Chapter 3. In the Senior Leadership Team there is, arguably, considerable positive job-related heterogeneity. The Team also had different educational backgrounds; some did not have degrees and for those that did subject matter varied. Members of the Team commented upon the diversity in the Team:

'Although we all came from the same mould ... and we've been groomed to be very much like each other, there are a lots of different people, different views and different character styles' (Interview Team member A) and *'recognising that we are a fairly diverse team with lots of different views and characters'* (Interview Team member P).

These quotes give a good account of both the differences and the sameness that existed in the Team.

The question remains as to what effect this homogeneity and heterogeneity may have on a large informational and consultation-type team. The evidence that the Team was willing to engage in debate with each other and produce many different opinions is plentiful, occurring in every meeting. This is the positive side of heterogeneity. One incidence, already reported above, when discussion on the Core Values and Standards booklet for the Royal Air Force became wider than the discussion that was asked for, and produced many different opinions but no consensus, perhaps epitomises this (Jupp, 2007a: 130). Again, in December of 2008 the discussion on strategy for the Royal Air Force (Jupp, 2009a: 132 et seq) produced a plethora of ideas. The meetings where the agenda was changed, also detailed above, are further evidence of the effect of sufficient job-related heterogeneity being an important issue for teams. This seems to be true in the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team even in the difficult, ambiguous space of strategic discussions, contrary to some (Handy, 1993).

Here, the size and nature of the Team is important. The Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was not trying to come to a solution in most of the cases they

discussed. By contrast, the discussion about the introduction of the booklet on core values and standards of the Royal Air Force **was** started to look for a solution, or singular outcome, but did not get one. However, for the most part this was not the case, decisions were taken by boards, themselves sub-sets of the Senior Leadership Team, outside the meetings of the Team. The idea being that the boards were better informed by the meetings of the Team. The discussion on the core values and standards booklet reinforces the point that heterogeneity, and the diversity of ideas that it brings with it, may not always be helpful. As one member said '*we're never going to convince everybody on all these issues*' (Interview Team member D). The fact that the Senior Leadership Team was not there to make decisions means that this handicap was not usually an issue for the Team, as that member went on to say '*the question of differences is important*'. What is not clear here is whether it is the size of the Team or the diversity within it that is the dominant factor, though both these things are related.

It has been suggested that homogeneity is important in executing strategy when unanimous commitment to that strategy has to be made (Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008) the implication being that unanimity is easier to obtain with a homogenous group. The evidence of alignment within the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team is strong. It was recognised both from outside the group and from within it. On two occasions the Team was told of peers from the other Services noticing a greater alignment of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team (Jupp, 2009a: 131 and 179). Equally, several members of the Team made comment on it themselves:

‘[the meetings] are useful in creating a common understanding and therefore a greater alignment’ (Interview Team member F) or *‘there wasn’t a consistent set of messages from the Senior Leadership of the Air Force. I think there are much more today’* (Interview Team member C). *‘Whoever touches the RAF gets the same story’* (Interview Team member V).

The meetings were successful in creating alignment amongst the Team but it is not easy to see what role homogeneity actually played in this. As there was a large external threat to the organisation looming over the Team, the ever-present fight for share of resources within the Ministry of Defence along with the then forthcoming change of government and promise of a Defence review, there were compelling reasons for the Team to become more aligned. The Senior Leadership Team meetings became the vehicle for that to happen. What effect homogeneity had on this remains open to debate and the long-term alignment of the Team post the Strategic Defence and Security Review, which is outside the scope of this study, would be an important issue.

There is evidence that the job-related heterogeneity within the Senior Leadership Team supports the generation of ideas and diversity of view within the Team that is important in resolving complex and difficult issues. This supports some of the literature on this subject. There is also some evidence that the homogeneous nature of the Senior Leadership Team helps with the alignment of the members of the Team behind the strategy taken by the Chief of the Air Staff, also supporting some of the literature in this respect. However, the size of the Team is also likely to be an issue

here and the fact that it is not constituted to make decisions ameliorates the negative effect of heterogeneity.

The literature on this subject is itself diverse and hardly agrees on definitions of homogeneity and heterogeneity let alone their outcomes (Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008) and this thesis is not attempting to resolve this. Yet it does show that the alignment of views and the greater discussion of different ideas by the members of the Team are the simple everyday mundane actions that promote trust (Coleman, 2009). While there is a tension between the homogeneity that helps to build trust and the heterogeneity that can hinder it (Hurley, 2006, Wiersema and Bantel, 1992, Carpenter, 2002), once trust is being built, it can be used to allow any heterogeneity within a team to produce the diversity of ideas. Though it is noted that excessive diversity is likely to be counterproductive (Carpenter, 2002, Wiersema and Bantel, 1992).

For the generation of ideas heterogeneity, though most likely job-related heterogeneity (Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008), was thought to be important. Opposed to this was the fact that similarities, homogeneity, were important for the generation of trust. Hurley (2006), however, does not specify whether that is job-related or general similarity, just that any similarity that can be emphasised is helpful in generating trust within a relationship where one contender is thought to have more power or a higher position than the other. For the purpose of this part of the research, any job-related heterogeneity that manifests should not be a problem to the generation of trust provided that there is some general homogeneity that can be emphasised at the same time.

The strict rank system in the Royal Air Force, the hierarchy, impinges here as it is as much a heterogeneous issue as anything else. The people with the higher rank are different to those with the lower ranks in the Senior Leadership Team (as elsewhere) as they have more power, display a different rank on their uniform and are paid more than the others, amongst other things. That power was exercised within the Senior Leadership Team meetings can be seen from this quote:

*'some members of the SLT tended to close down the debate by, you know, saying this is my view, therefore that's **the** view' (Interview Team member N),*

where a more senior officer is being accused of trying to stifle debate. This was discussed in the previous section along with the difficulties that it means for a Team that is supposed to be formed to have open and honest debates about the issues facing the organisation. Further, the debates within the Team were sometimes felt by some to be directed to certain channels and kept to within the confines of what some powerful members of the Team wanted to discuss:

'for example that we ... ended up effectively just talking about [an aspect of air power] because that's what [X] wants to talk about' (Interview Team member G).

The tone of the remarks within their context makes clear that the emphasis on power and hierarchy are not conducive to the generation of trust.

Other heterogeneous issues were also acknowledged:

‘as senior Air Force officers, and we’ve all been groomed to be very much like each other, [but] there are lots of different people, different views and different character styles in that sort of organisation so respecting each other’s contribution I think is something we probably need to get better at’ (Interview Team member A).

This is an interesting statement as it lays emphasis on many types of difference at the same time as acknowledging similarities in the Team – the grooming to be very much like each other. This recognises the extensive similar experience of many years in the same organisation with the same general education and training (within the Service) on generic courses while also seeing the different background education (school and university) and skills and specialisation (such as engineers, pilots, administrators, lawyer etc). These differences are seen by other members of the Team as well:

‘we are such an interesting mix of background, skill sets, educational levels, leadership qualities’ (Interview Team member I).

Yet the conclusion of the first quote is not only a positive take on the heterogeneous problem but also sums up a feeling cited by very many of the Team that listening was both something that they were good at but also needed to get better at.

In counterpoint to all these negative apparitions of difference there are equally plenty of appearances of positive notes of homogeneity. One member of the Team noted that the hierarchy was not so much of a problem as the meetings had progressed:

‘There is a levelling off as well of [the hierarchy] ... and I’ve noticed in particular the amount of defensiveness has dropped away’ (Interview Team member F).

Another member of the Team also noted this: *‘The ability to take off rank and position as you’re coming through the door and to be a bunch of mates, with a common interest, who can without prejudice speak their mind without fear’* (Interview Team member J).

This quote emphasises the success of the simple act of holding the Senior Leadership Team meetings out of uniform to ameliorate the differences in rank. All meetings after the first one were held in casual civilian dress. Another member of the Team emphasised the work-related similarity that the Team all belong, and are very loyal to, the same organisation: *‘We’re all Air Force’* (Interview Team member D); indeed, in its context this extract goes further to the concern that the excessive similarity of all being Royal Air Force officers might bring about too similar thinking over a problem and so not being able to see other solutions.

These more positive views of the issue of homogeneity versus heterogeneity also clearly led others to believe that trust had built to a degree sufficient for the Team to be able to have meaningful open discussions:

‘There is a healthy degree of openness and honesty [that] I appreciate ... and there is good humour as well’ (Interview Team member F), and:

‘being able to broach difficult subjects because you’ve done that [building trust]’ (Interview Team member B), as well as:

'The SLT has created ... the free and open debate that we have' (Interview Team member L).

The detrimental effects of heterogeneity on the ability to build trust between the members of the Senior Leadership Team are easy to see. However, the positive effects of emphasising homogeneity through the medium of the Senior Leadership Team are also there. There is a balance here that needs constant attention. The emphasising of similarity by being part of the 'Team' and the de-emphasising of rank by the use of casual, civilian dress (with no rank insignia) and meeting away from the office environment are obviously always necessary to prevent the power, hierarchy and difference from becoming the dominant characteristics within the Team and therefore preventing the reasonable building of trust.

There are also systemic issues that can destroy trust (Cox, 2007). Three possible sources of dissention and therefore lack of trust were identified within the Senior Leadership Team. First, the competition for promotion between the members of the Team as all and only those who could be promoted into higher positions within the Royal Air Force were members of the Team:

'one of the unique things that the Senior Leadership Team does in the Air Force ... is you are your own competitors and there can be no others there which is a big concern about the whole behaviours issue' (Interview Team member I).

Secondly, the competition for scarce resources for each division of the organisation as every division is commanded by a member of the Team. Third, the tension between those who worked in the Ministry of Defence ostensibly defining Defence and Royal Air

Force strategy, and those working in Air Command, the principle headquarters of the Royal Air Force, ostensibly working on the operational delivery of Air Power within the strategy. This last would be very similar to that systemic problem that Cox (2007) describes between the Front Line and GHQ in the First World War.

The evidence that there is competition for promotion is fairly evenly balanced and seemed, to some extent, to depend on the interlocutor's outlook. As one described it, if they were a cup-half-full person then the problem was not very apparent; if a cup-half-empty, then there were serious worries. So that views such as: *'The competition I sense for promotion still gets in the way'* (Interview Team member D) were expressed at the same time as views such as: *'I don't see that we are all climbing over one another's back and stabbing one another to get to the top'* (Interview Team member H). Perhaps the middle ground, that there is a problem here but that with care and continued attention it can be managed is the right answer as to whether the competition for promotion causes problems to the generation of trust in the Senior Leadership Team.

This is borne out by the comments of some:

'when I looked up as a one star I just saw a bunch of individuals working in their own stove pipes in their own areas talking to each other where they were mates and stabbing [each other in the back] where they weren't ... I think we're far removed from that now, clearly it's not perfect' (Interview Team member A).

The interviewee may be subject to fundamental attribution error (Popper, 2002) in a negative sense, giving worse notions to leaders as he attributed to them things that

were not in their gift or intent but when he joined the circle feeling that he was better than them. However, if he was expecting that sort of behaviour as he joined the Senior Leadership Team, an entity that was only formed shortly after he was promoted to that level, then he would have been looking for that behaviour. Two years later, when this interview was done, he felt that the poor competitive behaviour was less and that communication outside the silos, or 'stovepipes' in his words, of the organisation was much better. The indication being that the meetings of the Senior Leadership Team were having a beneficial effect on the circumstances that would allow trust to build. Nevertheless, it will always be a problem that needs to be guarded against as this last quote on the matter emphasises:

'Cooperative as opposed to competitive [behaviours are required]; but that is going to be very difficult to achieve in the hierarchic environment where people are promoted on the basis of perception of their achievements' (Interview Team member G).

Allied to the systemic issue of competition for promotion that moves against more trusting relationships being formed amongst the air marshals in the Royal Air Force, is the competition for resources between the separate parts of the organisation. In some senses this feeds into the competition for promotion in that those achieving more resources can be seen to be more important, and so more promotable, than their peers; but it is also a competition in its own right as that which it is more important to give resources to can be an ideological as well as a personal competition.

That the issue exists is clear from the interviews:

'I don't think anyone's done that kind of balance of paths between how we need to take forward Rotary Wing and Air Transport when faced resource problems and we're still trying to fix the fast jet fleet' (Interview Team member G).

That it feeds the personal and ideological competition can also be judged:

*'there's still I think some elements of a sort of the barons, the air barons, allowing perhaps ego occasionally to cause division between Groups but that's perhaps inevitable'*⁸ (Interview Team member N). And: *'however hard you tried, there was a split between the 2 camps'* (Interview Team member A).

That the problem exists is firmly demonstrated but the question remains as to whether the construct of the Senior Leadership Team was useful in ameliorating it. Certainly, the Chief of the Air Staff intended that it should (Torpy, 2007). However, some still thought that not enough was being done to sort out this issue at the time of the interviews:

*'There's also I think a requirement to be a bit clearer that we're working for the Air Force rather than for our Branch'*⁹ or our Group or our career' (Interview Team member N).

But there was also a countervailing view that the issue was being addressed by the construct of the Senior Leadership Team and would continue to get better:

'we're moving in a better direction with better ways of behaving to one another than we would have done otherwise' (Interview Team member C).

⁸ 'Groups' are semi-independent parts of the Air Command organisation.

⁹ A Branch is a specialisation, or group of specialisations, within the officer corps of the Royal Air Force.

Again it would seem that the level of optimism or pessimism of the interviewee affects the way they see the issue – getting better or needing dealing with. It seems obvious that if the interviewee had personally experienced a setback arising from the competition for resources their view would be materially affected; however, there is no evidence in the interviews to support this and more research would be needed to confirm it. Nevertheless, the construct of the Senior Leadership Team would seem to address if not resolve the issue of competition for resources destroying trust.

Lastly among the systemic issues examined is that of the geographical and organisational differences that engender different views of what is important and thus militate against trust forming. In particular, the research looked at the largely strategic view of those working in the Ministry of Defence in London and the largely operational view of those working in Air Command at High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire. Again it is easy to see that the problem exists from the interviews:

‘I think that the SLT is always going to be slightly loose in federation terms because of the geographical spread of its members ... less so with MOD [than it was with Personnel and Training Command and Strike Command¹⁰]’ (Interview Team member I).

This is reinforced by another interviewee who saw stronger bonds between those Senior Leadership Team members who worked at Air Command than those who were more dispersed:

¹⁰ Air Command was formed about a year prior to this interview from the previous two commands of the Royal Air Force: Strike Command and Personnel and Training Command, which were functionally and geographically separate.

'certainly we are a team here [at Air Command] because actually we see each other here. There is a large proportion of the SLT [at Air Command]' (Interview Team member D) (Just under 50% of the Team work at Air Command about 30% in the Ministry of Defence and the remainder spread across the Country and internationally) (Ross, 2009).

That the Senior Leadership Team construct helped to mitigate this issue is also clear from the interviews:

'Part of the geography is about splitting people up, of protecting behind staff officers, of limiting interactions except occasionally and very formally; in spades when it comes to people who don't work at Air Command. So simply getting us together more often ... I think is significantly beneficial' (Interview Team member C).

Just as the circumstance of many of the air marshals working together in the same location, Air Command at High Wycombe, was seen to help the feeling of being a team, of getting on together, so the very act of getting together as a wider team, of being able to talk to their more geographically dispersed colleagues informally and in person was helping the generation of understanding and thus trust. One interviewee was explicit about this:

'I think that the SLT is a very good way of generating collegiate goodwill'
(Interview Team member B).

In short, that the organisation made certain that there was a geographical and organisational separation between many of the air marshals is a problem in the generation of understanding and trust between them, again reflecting Collinson's (2005) assertion that distance reinforces power asymmetry. It is also certain that the formation of the Senior Leadership Team was, in itself, a great help in overcoming that systemic issue and moving the air marshals towards greater interpersonal trust and understanding.

The writing on the affective domain of trust positions it as something entered into after considerable time and effort in the cognitive domain (see for example Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). However, there is acknowledgement that there is a predisposition or propensity to trust another person (Mayer et al., 1995) which is inherent to the person doing the trusting. It would also seem from the work on emotional intelligence (Seal et al., 2006, Goleman, 1995, Goleman, 2000, Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008) that a person's emotional reaction to another person, their first impression of them, would affect their willingness to trust that person. That is, there is an affective domain of trust from the very beginning of a relationship and not just accessed after considerable cognitive work.

Social Identity Theory notes that situation is important in defining the things that show similarity and helps in excluding those things that emphasise difference (Ellemers et al., 2004). That is, the meetings of the Senior Leadership Team would help feelings of familiarity and similarity. That is shown to be so in the discussion of similarity above. However, at one meeting discussing the issues of trust, one member

of the Team noted that there was, or should be, a disposition to trust other members of the Team as they were all senior Royal Air Force officers and therefore there was a certain known quantity to them even if they were unknown personally. A sort of familial view of the Team enhanced by his use of the phrase '*blood is thicker than water*' (Jupp, 2010b: 65). This denotes a disposition towards trusting fellow Team members from a feeling that they are like the trustee and have had very similar experiences and tests to be promoted to this level. This is the start of an affective domain at the beginning of the process.

It is much harder to divine within the evidence whether the emotional response to meeting a person, the first impression, postulated from the review of the literature, was at work. However, the fact that two of the members of the Team that had a mutual antipathy did, in part, stage a reconciliation after a few meetings (Jupp, 2009a: 78 and 133-5) indicates that the affective domain was being worked upon throughout the process. It could be deduced from this that the emotional impact on interpersonal trust was present from the very beginning but more research would be required to confirm this. What can be inferred is that feelings are important throughout the process of building trust which is supported by the interview data:

*'peeling off the wrappers of individuals' **feelings** and perceptions helps us to understand each other'* (Interview Team member Q, my emphasis);

*'the development of that **sense** of unity seems to me to be the transcending quality'* (Interview Team member B, my emphasis).

Both these statements use the affective domain to show the build up of trust within the Team.

The success of the Senior Leadership Team in promoting and showing similarity in the members of the Team to improve trust in line with Hurley's (2006) model has already been discussed. The remaining nine factors in the model are split into two categories, those that can be affected by the person wishing to be trusted, and those that cannot. There are three factors in the latter category: Risk Tolerance, Level of Adjustment, and Relative Power. The factors that can be affected by the person wishing to be trusted are: Alignment of Interests, Benevolent Concern, Capability, Security, Predictability and Integrity, and Level of Communication and these will now be examined in detail.

5.2.2.3.1 Alignment of Interests

The alignment of interests is difficult to judge accurately as the personal interests of each individual in the Team are not brought to the fore. However, the Team is there to align the thinking of the individuals in it to a common understanding of what is important and should be taken forward by the Royal Air Force within the Defence arena. That this was successfully carried out by the meetings of the Team is relatively easy to determine both from the incident already quoted where, on two separate occasions, evidence was presented at meetings of the Team that the Team was acting together and aligned (Jupp, 2009a: 131 and 179) and from the interviews:

‘there’s quite a clear progression of [meetings leading to a] common understanding, leading to ideas and the ability to start taking this forward’

(Interview Team member K).

Counterpoising this strong evidence of alignment of interests of the Team in common organisational goals there is also evidence of personal agendas that not all buy into:

‘they’ve got strong individual views of their own and they may not sort of being willing to put them in second place to the team’ (Interview Team member I).

However, there is equally an acknowledgement that this would not be an unusual nor unexpected thing in such a close knit group that had been competing in the same organisation for such a long time:

‘[personal agendas are] actually inevitable in an organisation when people have grown up in competition for 25, 30 years before reaching the Senior Leadership Team’ (Interview Team member F).

Overall, then the meetings of the Senior Leadership Team has had a beneficial effect on the alignment of interests within the Team, which should promote the building of interpersonal trust.

5.2.2.3.2 Benevolent Concern

Moving on to Benevolent Concern, Hurley (2006) describes the need for the ‘superior’ to actively demonstrate benevolent concern for the ‘subordinate’ to improve the interpersonal trust. That is, any use of power must be seen to be in the

interests, or at least not against the interests, of the 'subordinate'. Instances where benevolent concern is not being shown seem rather easier to find among the evidence than the converse. For example statements such as:

'I've seen some pretty arrogant behaviour actually' (Interview Team member B)
or *'those that obviously seek to protect the power of an individual or a group within at the expense of the Air Force as a whole'* (Interview Team member M)
and

'Some of [the SLT meetings] have been driven by personalities at the time [for their own agenda]' (Interview Team member H)

would incline one to believe that the members of the Team by and large thought that their fellows were more concerned with the self than benevolent.

However, there are instances where benevolent concern is being shown and amongst a set of people that have *'grown up in competition for 25, 30 years'* an instance of benevolent concern is all the more powerful when set against the expectation of the inevitability of selfish competition mentioned above.

One such instance was at a meeting when one member of the Team was grumbling that he did not believe in the concept of the Senior Leadership Team and the effort being made to bring its members together another said to him *'what would it take to get you on board?'* (Jupp, 2008a: 145). In context this was an unselfish offer of assistance. More generally, comments such as: *'By and large, the SLT, in terms of personal dynamics, isn't bad'* (Interview Team member D) demonstrate that there was

a perception of a reasonable balance between the 'inevitable selfishness' and benevolent concern of its members.

While the ideals of benevolent concern were not being achieved, the meetings of the Team were helping the issue as it was noted that as meetings progressed over time the members language changed from 'I' to 'we' (Jupp, 2009a: 135). Additionally, members had seen an improvement:

'I didn't notice as much bad behaviour as I did a couple of years ago' (Interview Team member O) and *'I don't see that we are all climbing over one another's back to get to the top'* (Interview Team member H).

This last quote is all the more important as it was an answer given in response to a question asking for instances of bad behaviour.

5.2.2.3.3 Capability

The issue of capability is relatively easily dealt with in the scenario of the Senior Leadership Team. As all the members of it had had to pass the same promotion boards they all, more or less, perceived that every member was a capable person. There were however some jealousies over perceived preference for some specialities:

'I've watched people, you know in a competency based appointing system, people repeatedly being appointed to jobs where they have actually no competences whatsoever preferred against those who have generated considerable competencies over their careers' (Interview Team member B)

This was, however, an isolated case. A more common view is expressed by the following quote of one member of the Team:

'we are such an interesting mix of background, skill sets, educational levels, leadership qualities' (Interview Team member I).

The meetings of the Team were certainly instrumental in ensuring that this sort of view was more widespread as the World Cafe facilitation method ensured that all members of the Team got to hear each other's views and thinking through a lot of small group discussion rather than a few more dominant characters being the only ones heard. Even the complaint above about some people being preferred despite their competency was tempered as the member went on to say:

'[X has] done a fantastic job as [a particular post] but in fairness, and I'm sure [he] would be the first to acknowledge this, when he came into the job he'd got no background on it at all' (Interview Team member B).

Even two members of the Team who had been in entrenched conflict did begin to recognise the capability of the other when they listened sufficiently to understand their point of view (Jupp, 2009a: 78 and 133-5). The better networking right across the Senior Leadership Team induced by the meetings and their format facilitated the better view of capability of all its members.

5.2.2.3.4 Integrity and Predictability

The next of Hurley's (2006) factors is integrity and predictability. It would be trite to say that as integrity was a core value of the Royal Air Force (AP1, 2008) and

therefore all the members of the Team had it. It would also be naive. However, they certainly demanded it of themselves in the formulation of the Senior Leadership Team Manifesto (Torpy, 2007). Since the Chief of the Air Staff was very open about what was happening and did not seem to hide issues and the discussions were, by and large, very open from all members it would seem that integrity was displayed by the Team. Team member O sums this up *'I think people generally are fairly honest'*. There was only one piece of evidence that ran counter to this. Some Team members were upset at some of the Royal Air Force Transformation meetings for the Senior Leadership Team at the end of 2007. The Chief of the Air Staff did not attend and so nor did some others, their fellows who did, questioned their integrity (Jupp, 2008a: 7). Otherwise the Team meetings were designed and executed in such a way that encouraged the perception of integrity in the members.

5.2.2.3.5 Security

The penultimate of Hurley's factors to be examined is that of security. Were the Senior Leadership Team meetings a place that felt more secure than normal and thus more conducive to the build up of trust? They were certainly designed to be so from the beginning. The first meeting used the Exeter Friendly Consulting method (Gosling, 2006) described previously specifically for this purpose. The removal of uniform and other facilitation methods were used subsequently for just this purpose. That they were successful in this can be seen in many comments:

'just one session of this can only be of benefit to the Service and we are already seeing this in the Team' (Jupp, 2007a: 129).

'I think it has created a spirit of openness and understanding' (Interview Team member O).

'The more informal the setting the more productive the conversation and the output seems to be' (Interview Team member C)

are all comments that strongly support this assertion. However, the one comment that being too radical in the generation of some ideas for the future strategy for the Royal Air Force *'would be career suicide'* (Jupp, 2009a: 97) indicates that the level of security was not absolute for all members of the Team. At the time this comment was made, the member was new to the Team and it is unsurprising that it would take time to build confidence in the security of the Team. That member did not subsequently make any such assertions though he may still have felt them. It is safe, therefore, to conclude that the setting and facilitation of the Senior Leadership Team meetings did increase the security for its members.

5.2.2.3.6 Level of Communications

The final factor from Hurley's list to be considered is that of the level of communications. As has already been explained, this is an area where most members of the Team thought both that they were quite good and that they needed to get better. Certainly the Chief of the Air Staff thought that the meeting in February of 2009 was a low point (Jupp, 2010b: 21). This was the meeting at which the Chief of the Air Staff had had to concede a change of agenda because the majority of the Team did not want to discuss the agenda items which had been badly presented. The subsequent meeting in the June of the same year was the complete opposite with high

energy levels and good discussions and where the only other observer of the meetings, the personal service officer to the Chief of the Air Staff, noted that it was the best meeting he had seen (Jupp, 2010b).

Others had similar feelings considering earlier meetings as a whole: *'What seems to go well is the opportunity to have an open discussion'* (Interview Team member E). The rapprochement between the two members of the Team that had been at each other's throat also showed that the meetings had raised the level of communication in other ways. As they listened to understand what the other said, rather than just to argue with the point, they began to agree with (at least some) of the points each made (Jupp, 2009a:133-5).

The interview evidence of the need for better communications is also clear:

'they are not necessarily the voices that would be as well heard round the table as some of the others' (Interview Team member H) and again:

'I personally think we have to communicate amongst ourselves more clearly' (Interview Team member L) or:

'We do not communicate well with one another' (Interview Team member H) and:

I think there is an 'inner core' and an 'outer shell' in the SLT. The inner core would be CAS, couple of the 3 stars, couple of the 2 stars, more than a couple of the 2 stars; the rest are in an outer shell, and information isn't flowing between those two groups particularly well (Interview Team member D)

There are several things presented here that seem to be preventing good communication between members of the Team. A perceived in-group and out-group (Grint, 1995) naturally preventing flow, the dominance of some members of the Team and lack of clarity in how they communicate. The example given with the first of the three problems indicates that a lack of feedback given to the member left him feeling that he was unable to influence another member whose responsibility it was to produce the strategic writing for the Royal Air Force. This may be true or it may be just an impression, either way it does indicate a lack of communication.

The qualitative evidence is backed up with the quantitative evidence on communication. One of the questions in the Senior Leadership Team Survey was 'openly communicates within the Team' and shows improvement over the period of observation, moving from neutral to positive territory though not to excellence. See Figure 7. The vertical axis in Figure 7 shows part of a 5-point Likert scale moving from 1-strongly disagrees to 5-strongly agrees with 3 being neutral.

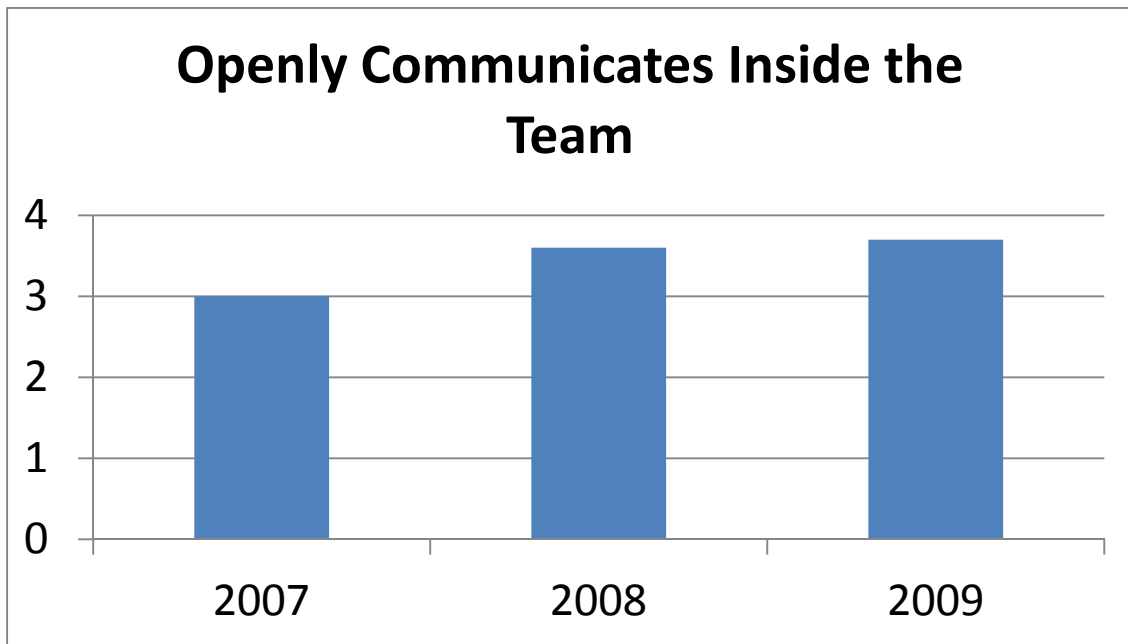


Figure 7 Intra-Team Communication (From Elliott-Mabey, 2009)

On balance it would seem that the level of communication within the Senior Leadership Team was enhanced most of the time but was far from perfect. The reasons that communications were less than ideal will always be multifarious but just as sweet things induce an appetite for more, so good communications increase demand. That demand may not always be able to be met but the effort on communications needs to be constant.

5.2.2.3.7 Quantitative Data on Trust

Overall then, the creation of the Senior Leadership Team had a positive effect on the seven malleable factors from Hurley's (2006) model to increase trust. As from the first meeting of the Senior Leadership Team Hurley's model had been consciously used in a deliberate effort to increase trust and the model explained directly to the Team, this was to be expected. The crucial question was did it work? There is both

quantitative and qualitative data to indicate that it did. First, the internal survey of the Senior Leadership Team showed that they grew in confidence with each other over time as is shown in the graph at Figure 8. The respondents were asked to gauge each question on a 5-point Likert scale with 1-strongly disagrees to 5-strongly agrees and 3 being neutral. The questions were:

Question 2: 'Respects each others' contributions'.

Question 11: 'Openly communicates inside the Team'.

Question 13: 'Works as a team'.

Question 15: 'Is honest with each other'.

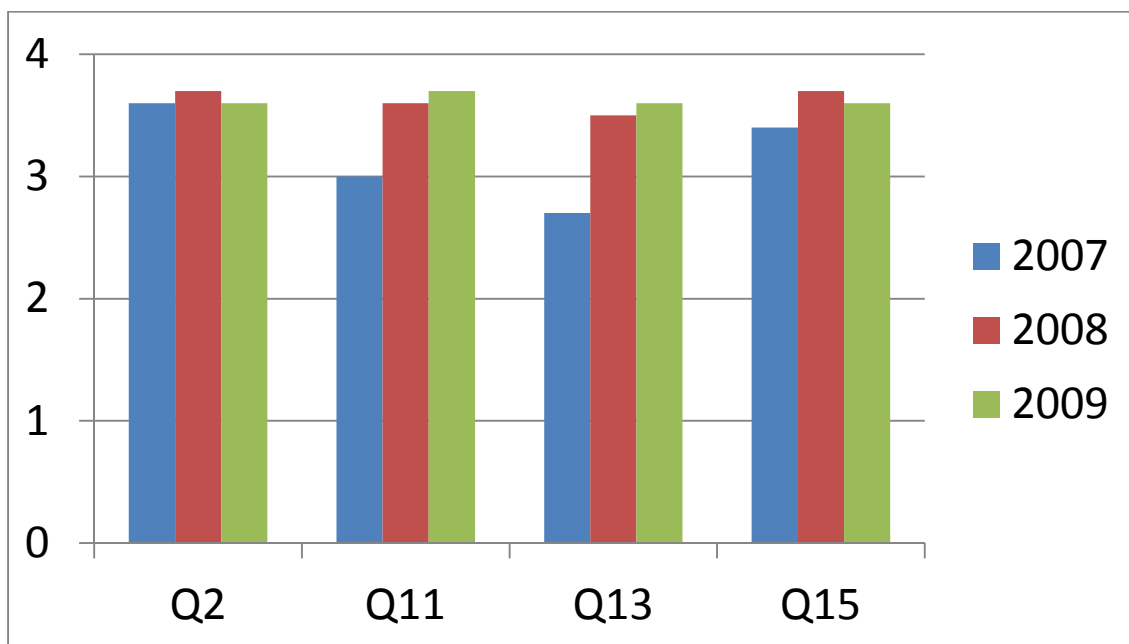


Figure 8 Trust Within the Team (From Elliott-Mabey, 2009)

Within the allowable statistical variation (Elliott-Mabey, 2009) there is no change in the level of respect the members have for the contribution of their fellows

and overall it is a positive perception. However, there is a significant increase in the perception of the level of communication within the Team and with how they perceive they work together as a team. There is also a small increase in their perception of their honesty which would indicate an increase in the level of perception of integrity. This quantitative data reinforces the qualitative information that the creation and regular meeting of the Senior Leadership Team did increase the level of interpersonal trust within the Team as two of the factors that show an increase directly relate to two of Hurley's (2006) malleable factors.

The third factor that significantly increased, that of working as a team, moves from a slightly negative score of 2.8 (3 being the neutral point on the scale) to a healthily positive range of 3.5 to 3.7. While directly reinforcing the success of the team building effort noted in the qualitative data in the section on teams above, this also indirectly indicates a positive move in four of Hurley's other factors. A team that is working better together is a more secure place to be (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2009, Sheard et al., 2009) and would be a symptom of another similarity – that of belonging to a worthwhile team. It would also be an indicator of alignment of interests as a team could not work if interests were badly misaligned. Finally, it is also a pointer towards a better perception of capability, as a team that is working better must, by definition, be a more capable team which would imply that, together, its members were more capable.

Only for the last iteration of the survey in 2009, after the formal end of the Royal Air Force Transformation effort for which the survey was designed, was it

possible to insert a direct question on trust. Only 58.3% of the Team answered this question positively while the remaining 41.7% answered either neutrally or negatively, the overall mean score being 3.4 out of 5 (Elliott-Mabey, 2009). However, at this survey there were five new members of the Team (Ross, 2009) that had not been to a meeting of it prior to answering the survey and may have scored this item higher had they done so, as has been discussed previously in this Chapter (Jupp, 2010b: 91).

The perception of trust within the Team by those who observed it from positions just subordinate to the Team was very low indeed at 7.7% (Elliott-Mabey, 2009). This would indicate that without experience of the Team and its meetings, this question is likely to be scored considerably lower than established members of the Team. Indeed, one new member of the Team said after his first meeting, which occurred shortly after he had completed the survey, that he would have scored this item higher had he been able to complete the survey after the meeting rather than before it (Jupp, 2010b: 91).

Nevertheless, the growing confidence of the members of the team with each other and the relatively good direct score on trust at the end of the observations are good indicators of the positive effect that the creation of the Senior Leadership Team had on the generation of interpersonal trust within the Team. That the score on the direct question of trust is relatively good is supported by the Institute of Leadership and Management survey on trust which scored trust in the senior military (CEOs) at 66% which was second equal in the table and the top score was 67% (Pardey, 2010: 9). This was an increase from the 2009 score for the military of 59%. The limitations to

the use of this Institute of Leadership and Management data in support of the direct quantitative data have already been discussed.

The qualitative evidence also allows room for debate. One member was unequivocal:

‘overall as a team I pretty much trust those people’ (Interview Team member O),

as you would expect from the quantitative data above. Another member was pretty firm in the negative, as you would also expect:

‘we are still not a team of mates who trust one another and communicate with one another’ (Interview Team member H).

Although these interviews were done about a year before the direct question on trust was put to the Team, the two sets of data seem to be consistent as you would expect to find negative views if 41.3% were ambivalent or did not trust their fellow team members.

5.2.2.3.8 Summary on Trust

In summary on trust, systemic issues in an organisation that work against the building of trust have to be guarded against. In the case of the Senior Leadership Team these were the intense competition for promotion between the members of the Team who were all and the only competitors for the more senior positions in the organisation. Then there was the competition for resources, which was a subset of the competition for promotion and lastly the divisions in any large organisation between

the centre and the periphery (Wildavsky and Douglas, 1983) which manifested itself between those who worked in the Ministry of Defence and those in Air Command. The Senior Leadership Team meetings were shown to have ameliorated these effects through good facilitation and setting and by improving communication between the members of the Team, allowing trust to be built.

The issue of homogeneity promoting trust while heterogeneity undermined it was also evident within the senior cadre of the Royal Air Force. The Senior Leadership Team meetings naturally and by design emphasised the similarities in the members of the Team allowing the homogeneity present to promote the building of trust. Even though the similarities were emphasised to increase trust, the heterogeneity could still be used to explore the difficult and ambiguous world of strategy. This could be seen from the discussions of the subject by two members of the Team who thought very differently, and were normally at loggerheads, but could at times agree on some things and agree to differ on others (Jupp, 2009a: 133-5). Similarity was the first of the seven malleable factors of Hurley's (2006) ten factor model for increasing trust that was used to do just that within the Senior Leadership Team. It was shown to be successfully promoted as were the other six malleable factors of: Alignment of Interests, Benevolent Concern, Capability, Predictability and integrity, Level of Communications, and Security.

The other issue to be examined was the cognitive and affective domains of trust. The research showed that the affective domain of trust was at work throughout the effort to increase trust rather than being an area that was moved into after

considerable work in the cognitive arena, which was the paradigm supported by the literature (McAllister, 1995a, Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). However, more work is necessary to support the hypothesis arising out of the work on emotional intelligence that first impressions are important in the formation of trust and the affective domain has to be worked on from the very beginning of a relationship. All that this research has shown is that the affective domain of trust influences interpersonal trust from the very beginning of a relationship.

The quantitative data was consonant with the qualitative data in showing improvement in the factors that lead to the building of trust over two and a half years of the Team and also showing a reasonably high level of trust within the Team at that point. Overall, it has shown that working on the malleable factors within Hurley's (2006) model with the everyday mundane actions (Coleman, 2009) of a large team does increase trust.

Without the trust that their careers outside the Senior Leadership Team would not suffer, the views required by the Chief of the Air Staff to better inform himself and the Air Force Board would not be forthcoming. There would only be the sycophantic views reinforcing the opinions already stated by the more senior members being put forward, as was the case with some new members of the Team before they realised how the Team worked and trusted to its safety (Jupp, 2008a: 186). However, the trust was built and there was equally good evidence that it did facilitate the ability of the Team to function as the Chief of the Air Staff wanted it to. That Team members were

able to express their views freely without fear that it would prejudice their career prospects outside the Senior Leadership Team. For example:

'it's been useful by allowing everyone to have their say' (Interview Team member R) and:

'there's a fairly free exchange. I don't get the feeling that you have to be careful what you said' (Interview Team member O).

This is backed up with the quantitative data from the Senior Leadership Team Survey (Elliott-Mabey, 2009) which showed considerable improvement in the level of communication within the Team and with the members consideration of themselves that they worked as a team. It also showed that there were consistently good results for their honesty and respect for each other's contribution. This thesis does not claim that the situation was perfect, and the data is clear that it was not, but there was a significant improvement in the interpersonal trust between the Team members and a subsequent improvement in the quality of the debate about the complex issues facing the organisation.

5.3

CONCLUSION

The first three parts of this Chapter laid out the patterns of the meetings of the Senior Leadership Team, examined the formation of the Team against the most promising model from the literature review, and then studied the data about the establishment and sustainment of a different culture within the hierarchy of the organisation. The pattern of the meetings showed the likeness of the research to

action research with problems being addressed, potential solutions found and tried and meetings adapted and taken forward in new directions over the two and a half years of the observations of the Team. The most promising model from the literature review for the formation of large senior leadership teams was that from Wageman et al (2008):

1. The need for the team;
2. A clear purpose for the team;
3. The right composition;
4. The right structure, support and coaching;
5. Strong leadership;

The qualitative and quantitative data examined showed that the construct of the Senior Leadership Team addressed all five criteria. The Team was formed because the Chief of the Air Staff wanted to work in a team of this sort creating the first part of the need. That need was also seen by the other members of the Senior Leadership Team as they recognised that they required to be more aligned and effective as the senior leadership of the Royal Air Force. They also saw the need to work better together, not just compete with each other for their promotion in the organisation, and to use their collective intelligence and wisdom, gained over their years in the organisation, to better effect.

The clarity of purpose for the Team was always a contentious issue and needed constant attention and drive from the Chief of the Air Staff. This was doubly apparent when the Chief of the Air Staff changed towards the end of the period of observation

and the Team wondered how the new Chief of the Air Staff would use the Team. The effort spent on clarity for the Team, on the challenge set the Team and consequentiality of their work also developed the sense of purpose for the Team.

Consideration of the composition of the Team was important for a large consultative and informational team such as the Senior Leadership Team just as Wageman et al (Wageman et al., 2008) had said it would be for the smaller decision-making team. Only for the large team, as argued in the Literature Review, inclusion rather than exclusion was seen to be necessary. Because inclusion of all areas of an organisation in such a team is necessary for the large team types, the data also showed that facilitation was very necessary to deal with the problems of behaviour raised by large teams. For large teams, careful consideration of the composition is necessary, who should be included in the team and why, and coincident with that is equally careful consideration of the facilitation that will be used.

The data showed that the administrative support for the Senior Leadership Team was in place and that the structure of the Team developed over the course of the meetings with the help of the external facilitator. That support included the development of induction interviews for new members to allow them to consider the development of the Team prior to their first meeting, the offer of coaching from an independent source or the facilitators and meetings with the Chief of the Air Staff. Because of the size of the Team, these meetings with the leader did not cover all the support or coaching Wageman et al considered should be given by the leader, but they did give the members of the Team individual time with the Chief of the Air Staff. The

remainder was delivered by the facilitators or executive coaches. It was noted that 'coaching' here was not used in the normal sense of executive coaching but in a more general sense used by Wageman et al to denote the support given by a leader to his or her team members in a one-on-one setting.

The fifth criterion was the necessity for leadership and the data was clear that strong leadership was needed to make the Team work. Not only were members clear that it was needed just to keep the Team in being: '*it will require leadership in itself [to keep the SLT going]*' (Interview Team member I), but the data also showed that it was necessary to normalise the behaviours that the Chief of the Air Staff required for open and free discussion and an equality of ideas.

The third part of the Chapter concentrated on this behavioural, cultural change. The literature review surmised that four things were necessary for the establishment and maintenance of a more egalitarian culture within a hierarchy and for the behavioural changes from competition to collaboration:

- a well formed team,
- leadership,
- a compelling reason for a different culture,
- great trust.

The second part of the Chapter demonstrated that the Team had formed and that leadership was there to support it. The behaviours of some members were not always conducive to the intention of the Team. For that reason the culture had to

change. One of the behaviours that needed to change was the exercise of power in a way that hindered the free and equal exchange of views. From the data it can be seen that power was always at play in the Senior Leadership Team and was not always seen to be being exercised benignly. Facilitation was always necessary to ameliorate these issues. However, facilitation on its own was not enough, strong leadership was also necessary. Even then, together facilitation and strong leadership were not always successful and poor outcomes ensued. Hard work on the leadership and facilitation were then necessary to ensure that subsequent meetings were successful. The data showed that with them they could be. The irony here, that strong leadership, the imposition of will, was necessary to achieve a more egalitarian team in a hierarchy should be noted. It is clearly expressed in the following quote:

'people who close down the debate because of the rank differential.

Interestingly, when CAS [the Chief of the Air Staff] left I sense that increased marginally.' (Interview Team member I)

Lastly, the data showed that trust had been built within the Senior Leadership Team. Attention to the systemic issues that could have destroyed trust: the competition for promotion, the competition for resources, and the natural tension between those at the centre of the organisation and those on its periphery, allowed trust to build. Equally, attention was given to the seven malleable criteria noted by Hurley (2005) as necessary to build trust; and trust did build. The data also showed that the affective domain of trust is a factor from the beginning of a relationship. Once the trust had been built, the data was clear that better discussions were had in line

with the intention of the Chief of the Air Staff for his team, confirming the four criteria thought necessary to create and maintain a different culture in a hierarchy: a well formed team, leadership, a good reason, and trust.

From the two sections of this Chapter, it is possible to put forward a single model that should cover the conditions required to establish an egalitarian team in a military hierarchy. Since, from the second half of the Chapter, a well formed team and leadership are required for the change of culture but are already part of the model used in the first half of the Chapter for forming the team, it is reasonable to postulate a seven-point model:

- the need for a team;
- a clear purpose;
- the right composition (excluding or including members depending on the size and nature of the team);
- the right structure, support, coaching and facilitation;
- strong leadership;
- a compelling reason for a different culture;
- and great trust.

A compelling reason for a different culture and great trust up and down the hierarchy have been added to Wageman et al's (2008) five-point model to cover the additional issues of changing the culture within the team to that of the organisation to which it belongs. The third criterion from the Wageman et al model has been modified to allow for the inclusion of members in large consultative or informational teams, as

the first half of this Chapter concluded was necessary. And the fourth criterion modified to allow for the coaching to come from other individuals than just the leader of the team and the support to include facilitation that is necessary in large teams to deal with the group size paradox and imported poor behaviours. Two questions remain, are the seven criteria both necessary and sufficient, and how valid and reliable are the results?

5.4 Reliability and Validity

Taking reliability first, Chapter 4 laid out that the reliability of the research would rest on the cross method triangulation of the results and it has been shown that the qualitative data and the quantitative data are matched in their support for the theoretical model. That is, where both applied, the qualitative and quantitative data agreed with each other. They both showed that there was a balance in opinion but that there was always majority in favour of the positive conclusion that the model was correct. In so far as the reliability can be tested then, the results stand.

Chapter 4 also laid out the five quality and validity criteria of:

1. Dialogic and process validity,
2. Outcome validity,
3. Catalytic validity,
4. Democratic validity, and
5. Process validity.

The dialogic and process validity were laid out in Chapter 4. The necessary reflexivity to counter biases (Herr and Anderson, 2005, McNiff and Whitehead, 2006) was built into the research and the processes were developed to ensure that the dilemmas of action research (Rapoport, 1970) were dealt with. This leaves the outcome, catalytic and democratic validity to be discussed here.

This chapter has argued that the outcomes from the Senior Leadership Team have proved beneficial to the Chief of the Air Staff. All air marshals have been included, especially those working 'outside' the Royal Air Force, and have been able to give their opinions. Trust was increased between the members of the Team and behaviours had improved meeting the outcome validity criterion (Herr and Anderson, 2005: 55). Indeed, a class of problems were identified, the issues that would have to be considered to solve them surfaced, the ideas from this implemented and the problems addressed which also created value (Moore, 1995). However, it is too early to say whether increase in trust within the Team has led to better outcomes for the implementation of Mission Command in the wider organisation. What the continuing existence of the Team under its third leader, a long-term member of the Team, does do is argue strongly for its success and usefulness to both leader and members.

Catalytic validity is a measure of how the research has allowed the participants, including the researcher, to realise reality and change it (Herr and Anderson, 2005: 55). The fact that there were changes, that outcomes were improved, is indication enough that realisations occurred amongst the Team. The start of this Chapter laid out the ethnography of the Senior Leadership Team and demonstrates the amount of

reflection and learning the researcher had to do to get the Team to function as it was envisaged. To adapt to the reality as it unfolded. As both the Team and the researcher learnt, the third validity criterion is met.

The fourth criterion can be described as '*the degree to which the constructs and products of the research are relevant to the participating group*' (Herr and Anderson, 2005: 56). The relevancy of the Senior Leadership Team construct to the Chief of the Air Staff can be seen by its continuance; if it was not relevant, he would not continue with it since it is completely his call whether to do so. The relevance to the other members of the Team can be measured from the quotes used in this Chapter that it is very necessary for there to be such an entity. There were dissenters from this opinion but the weight of evidence remained with the Team being relevant. Democratic validity is, therefore, met.

The final question to be answered is whether the model tested encapsulates sufficient criteria. As all the qualitative data was read, re-read and reflected upon no theme or issue arose that suggested that an alternative, or further, criterion should be inserted in the model. The question remains as to the extent of bias that the researcher makes when constructing the data (Kuhn, 1970). It is highly likely that observations of the Team meetings will be concentrated on the issues in the mind of the researcher, ie those that are in the model in the first place. However, the chaotic nature of this research, in that the research was well under way before the thesis, let alone the research question, the literature review and the theoretical model were decided upon, mitigates this form of bias. This is not to say that another researcher

could not make a different construction in the future using the same data. It does, however, strengthen the reflexive barrier to bias that the research is founded upon.

None of the quantitative data was designed solely for the purpose of the research. The only questionnaire that was purpose built for the Senior Leadership Team was, in great part, designed for the purpose of the Royal Air Force Transformation effort. As such, many of its questions stand by that purpose not those of the formation and outcomes of the Senior Leadership Team alone. As the quantitative data supports the qualitative data, this increases the likelihood that the conclusions of the thesis are correct and that the model derived from the literature review is both necessary and sufficient.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will reflect on the research design and methodology, looking at its strengths and weaknesses with respect to the research question posed. It will go on to reflect on the ethical challenges encountered during the research before exploring the results in relation to the research question originally set out in the Chapter 1. It will set out the areas for further research that this research has suggested before finally reflecting on the research itself.

6.1 Research Design

The research question set out in Chapter 1 was:

What are the conditions required to establish an egalitarian team in a military hierarchy?

The Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was set up at the beginning of 2007 as a purely practical endeavour to resolve various organisational problems. It was not a solely academic research effort. Nor was the effort started with this question in mind. Stock had been taken of the situation as it was, concerns identified, a possible way forward thought of and that way, the formation of the Senior Leadership Team, tried. The effects of what was happening were monitored, the practice of the meetings of the Team modified and moved in the new direction. Just

the action research cycle (Revans, 1980, Herr and Anderson, 2005) explained in Chapter 4. From the beginning, the leader of the team sought to create a large consultative and informational team, to increase interpersonal trust within the team and to modify the behaviours of its members ensuring that all contributions were equally valued. These ambitions were made plain in the Team's manifesto worked out in June 2007 (Torpy, 2007).

For this work, the literature for the generation of interpersonal trust was searched, as was that for dealing with the issues of power and changing culture, one of the manifestations of which is behaviour (Schein, 1996, Schein, 2004). The experience of the leader and the facilitators was used to form the team, especially that of the external facilitator. He was brought in for the second meeting of the Team in June 2007 onwards, because of his experience with the only other similar such team (Mugford and Rogers, 2005). The most promising model of how to form large teams from the literature review was not published until a year later (Wageman et al., 2008).

As the project of the Senior Leadership Team developed, the approach was changed to meet the demands of the results that were being required at the time. Referring back at all times to the uses the leader of the Team wished to put the Team to and the ideals expressed in their own manifesto, different avenues were sought and outcome pursued (eg, the effort to create a different communication method from the Team to the wider organisation that the Team experimented with in 2008). Those that worked continued to be used; those that did not were rejected.

While the project of the Senior Leadership Team progressed, the observation of it, the academic research, continually looked to refine the research question. The review of the literature proceeded at pace alongside the action research of the Team meetings. This somewhat ad hoc state of affairs was not the most satisfactory design of a research project. A more measured approach where the project was foreseen, the literature able to be reviewed prior to the action, and theories and models from the literature tested in the action would have been a cleaner model. A full ethnography using interviews and observations before during and after the formation of the Team would have been a more logical and understandable approach. However, the time to achieve such a programme might be a factor in trying to design such an approach within the normal academic timelines for a PhD.

The practicalities of the situation have to be borne in mind. The creation of such a senior, large military team is unusual. Access by a researcher to such a team is even more unusual. The organisational dynamics that moved into the creation of this team gave little time for the researcher to prepare beyond servicing the needs of the action research as indicated above. Yet the unusual opportunity to research and record the situation could not be missed. The ad hoc approach to the research had to be accepted if the opportunity was not to be lost. Some of the models and theories from the literature such as those on creating interpersonal trust (eg Hurley, 2006), on the effects of power (eg Mintzberg, 1983, Handy, 1993) and, to a lesser extent, culture change (eg Schein, 2004, Handy, 1993) were used contemporaneously. Some of the literature, most particularly Wageman et al (2008), was used after the fact and the data used to test it.

Accepting the ad hoc and messy situation as it was, it was not considered to have any material effect on the research overall. The project may have been better managed, that is the action research better informed, but it was carried through with best available information and an experienced external facilitator. The observation notes and the interview material were used to help design each new meeting of the Team. For the academic research, what was happening in the Team required much reflection and re-examination of the data produced, searching for complementary and contradictory themes within it; something that would always have to happen after the fact. Because of this, the less than ideal design of the research created problems but did not detract from the results.

6.2 Methodology

The researcher felt an initial inclination for a realist epistemology and a positivist ontology starting the research. It may well be that there is a considerable social bias towards positivism in the Social Sciences (see for example Jones, 2011). However, for this research there was a growing realisation that, realist epistemology or not, a positivist stance was not possible in the circumstances. Within all the interactions of a large team at the top of a large organisation in a real setting it is not possible to control things so that single variables could be tested, as was argued in Chapter 4. Some form of construction has to be made.

Taking this further, in the research design forced upon this research, as the rare opportunity to examine a senior military team was taken, the researcher was pitched into the research. There was no opportunity to decide upon which variables might be

of interest. As the research progressed, the researcher became more comfortable with the idea of an interpretivist epistemology with constructivist ontology.

Developing this train of thought, there comes the question of how much quantitative data is grounded in a realist epistemology and positivist ontology. The questionnaire data often used gives statistical and numerical exactitude, at least as far as statistics can be exact. But the questions themselves were decided upon by someone; what of the questions that were not asked? One model for a phenomenon was used, would the results have stood if another had been used? The way the questions were worded was decided by someone. What would the results have been with a different wording? There is a certain amount of subjectivism always built into the data. Other researchers have also argued that most social research has a degree of subjectivism (Jones, 2011: 268, Alvesson and Deetz, 2000) and some have claimed that constructionism is the only ontology that applies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002).

The questionnaires used in this research were neither designed nor administered by the researcher and as such provide a different perspective, what subjectivity there is belongs to someone else. The data has been used to refer to individual questions within the questionnaires that are aligned to the themes in this research. The statistics then support, or not, the qualitative data from the researcher giving some triangulation between qualitative and quantitative data, they do not necessarily uncover any reality.

Returning then to the question that the research set out to ask:

What are the conditions required to establish an egalitarian team in a military hierarchy?

The methodology requires that any answers are given on more than one level. First, the results of this research do not apply to 'a' team; they apply to a specific Team. The interpretivist epistemology does not uncover some 'truth' applicable to all. It allows a construction that is applicable to the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team. Although, as the Team membership changed considerably over the time of the observations, it implies that the results may be applicable not just to a particular set of individuals but to a wider set of military people. As all the members of the Team, bar one, were Royal Air Force personnel, care must be taken not to try to generalise too far. However, one member of the Team was a Civil Servant indicating that the results may have utility in the public sector beyond the military. But one member of a team is not sufficient to base such generalisation on and both cases of further utility, in the wider military and in the public sector generally, would need to be tested in further research.

There is, though, no fundamental, a priori, reason that the results should not be generalisable. One can go further and say that the results here should be perfectly transferable into any reasonably large organisation that has a hierarchy, ostensible or hidden, that wishes to put together a large top team where all opinions are to be considered equally.

The research was intensely practical. It set out problems within an organisation and devised solutions for them. Those solutions were put into a set of practices to

solve those problems. The success or otherwise of those practices, which this Chapter will reflect upon, can be seen by practitioners as working in the circumstances and with the people of this research. Practitioners can judge for themselves the value of using these solutions in other circumstances with other people. As such, value has been created by the research (Moore, 1995).

Considering the success of the practices identified in this research is the second level on which the answers to the research question should be judged. Because of the subjectivity of the research, there is a sense in which the question can never be definitively answered. Only the views of the participants can be offered. Two further questions then seem to arise. How genuine are the views expressed and what other interpretations could be put on the evidence.

The worth of the views expressed can be judged by their consistency over time and across the group of participants. The different types of data used also add to the consistency argument. The quantitative data supports the qualitative data lending weight to the views expressed. Contrary views were also expressed indicating that not all views were being suppressed. While there can be no proof that views expressed are genuine, it would also be unreasonable here to suppose they were not. There is equally no evidence to support the view that they were not. Some scepticism may be wise, but complete refusal to accept any statement at its face value is unhelpful and as illogical as complete trust.

The integrity of the construction put on the data lies in the integrity of the researcher. As has been stated above, it has not been the intention to put forward

widely generalisable findings. The case study here is philosophically limited by its nature and acknowledged to be so, but it is intended that the results be transferable to other, similar circumstances. That there may be bias in the way the construction of the data has been made has also been acknowledged and explored in Chapter 4. Recognised methods of guarding against that bias have been used. Though future examinations of the data may consider different constructions, the ones presented here were relevant to the participating group which gives validity to the research (Herr and Anderson, 2005).

Finally, whether a strategic, cross functional, leadership team, where all views are considered equal, has been established and maintained in a military hierarchy can be considered against the longevity of the Team. The strategic, cross functional nature of the Team, and the equality of the views expressed, are set out in the Team manifesto (Torpy, 2007). That manifesto was reaffirmed, with only minor word changes, after a new leader took over the Team (Jupp, 2010a). As the Team still exists and carries on its business, it must still be of use and worth to the leader of the Team and its members. It should, therefore, still be a strategic, cross functional, leadership team where all views are considered equal.

It is not in the researcher's gift to keep the Team going, it only continues because the leader of the Team wants it to. Some members may only attend because they see it is in their best interest to do so regardless of the worth of the meeting, yet some still express the view that the meetings are worthwhile to them (Jupp, 2010a). As the Manifesto is the Team's expression of what they want the Team to be, the

meetings must be achieving the things set out in it, which include the equality of views from across all functions, to a satisfactory degree. That the Team still exists demonstrates that it has been maintained. It may well be that the Team will come to an end at some time, that it may be 'adjourned' (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977); however, it has been given a new lease of life in the Summer of 2013 on the appointment of its third leader (Jupp, 2010a). It can, therefore, be considered successful.

This research has made a significant contribution to knowledge in the area of large teams. First it is a rare, if not unique, insight to the workings of a large senior military team. Secondly, it has expanded our knowledge of how egalitarian teams work in a military hierarchy and proposed a model that should be transferable to any hierarchy.

6.3 Ethical Considerations

Chapter 4 addressed the ethics of the research in relation to the Economic and Social Research Council Framework and the Ministry of Defence's own ethical considerations for social science research. Chapter 4 also examined the research against the dilemmas faced by action researchers (Rapoport, 1970). Rather than reaffirm the ethics of this research, this section reflects on the issues surrounding the ethics of the research.

Keeping the anonymity of those participating in the research is not easy. Considerable care needs to be taken when writing up scenarios and in reporting speech not to inadvertently identify a member of the Team by circumstance or phrase. More difficult was the relationship between myself, the researcher, and also one of the facilitators of the Team, and the leader of the Team. As was noted in Chapter 4, the Team leader did, on occasion, ask for details of individual views that had been given in confidence. Discussion also centred on the rate of attendance of certain members of the Team. As the leader had attended all the meetings of the Team, he knew who had attended or not, though he may not have kept records, and so this was considered a legitimate discussion to have.

Both for the research and for the position of facilitator, I needed to keep the trust of the leader of the Team. For both reasons, trust also needed to be maintained with the members of the Team. In some interviews, I gained the impression that the interviewee wanted their views on certain things to be repeated to the leader of the Team. An example of this was one member of the Team working in a Defence rather than a Royal Air Force post who did not attend any of the meetings at that time. In his interview, he expressed strong support for the Team but gave his opinion that he did not attend because he thought it would compromise his position with his Royal Navy and Army colleagues were he to do so. In other interviews, this was patently not the case, such as the remarks that were considered '*career suicide*' (Jupp, 2009a: 97).

In all cases, I kept the integrity of the position of researcher and did not report specific people's views to the leader. This position put more strain on my relationship

with the leader of the Team while maintaining the trust of the members. The relationship with the leader was maintained by reporting to the leader the group views of the Team with statistical numbers that supported the view. This compromise worked, though again great care had to be taken not to inadvertently reveal identities.

Overall, it seemed that ethical pitfalls and compromises to maintain a reasonable ethical position and the integrity of the research and the researcher had to be constantly watched for. Working within a senior team where the competition for promotion within it is acknowledged, sharpens the need to consider the ethical dimensions of the research at all times. Additionally, the sensitive nature of some of the discussions also brought with it further considerations of what could be included in the thesis and what could not.

6.4 Literature Review

This section will examine the results of the literature review against the research question originally set out in Chapter 1, this was:

What are the conditions required to establish an egalitarian team in a military hierarchy?

The results relate to the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team not any team. However, the Senior Leadership Team is *a* team and though the results refer to this team, there is no a priori reason that the results could not be relevant to another such

team in a hierarchy. This model could be transferred to any hierarchy. More research would be required to test generalisability.

The literature review looked first at the formation of teams as it was to form a team that the case study set out to do. The literature review noted that much of the literature on teams considered that a team was a small number of people who had decisions to make. Few researchers looked at groups of people brought together for other purposes. The most promising of the literature to meet the requirements of the case study was Wageman et al (2008) whose construction of a consultative and informational type team seemed to fit the need for the case study. Their research produced the 5-point model:

1. The need for a team.
2. A clear purpose.
3. The right composition.
4. The right structure, support and coaching.
5. Leadership.

However, it was also noted in the literature review that for a team that was to reach all parts of an organisation, especially one where some individuals were working in parts of a wider organisation, 'the right composition' meant including these people not excluding them to prevent unwanted behaviours entering the team. Because they were to be included the imported behaviours would then have to be dealt with. Equally, it was noted that the large size of the team would invoke the 'group size

paradox' (Esteban and Ray, 2001). It was considered that facilitation might provide the answers to these issues.

The second consideration from the literature review was that the 5-point model required the leader of the team to provide individual support to the team members in the form of coaching. For the team in the case study, which had 34 members, the review speculated that the leader of such a team, also the head of a large organisation, may find coaching all 34 members too much of a burden.

The 5-point model did not seem to address the issue of the Senior Leadership Team being formed in a strict hierarchy. As all views in this Team were to be considered equal, the first consideration that would need to be addressed would be how power was used in the Team. There would be a need to ensure that power was not used to suppress the views of more junior members of the Team. The junior members would need to trust that they would not fall foul of those who held the future of their careers in their hands.

This led to the consideration of how to change the culture of the Team from the culture of the organisation as a whole. Seeing culture as like organisational identity (Cornelisson et al., 2007), it concluded that it could be changed. The review of the literature had few examples of perpetuating a different culture embedded within a culture, the closest being the example of Fairtlough (2007b). It showed that this would also require leadership and great trust within the Team. Fairtlough also notes that the leader in question, Browne, had to use his hierarchical power to set up the 'responsible autonomy' within a hierarchy.

Finally, as trust featured in most of the considerations thrown up by the literature review, how to increase interpersonal trust within the Team was examined. Through the many writings on, and models of, trust examined, two were found that looked at how interpersonal trust was generated. Coleman (2009), who found that the everyday interactions of people increased trust; and Hurley (2006) who proposes a ten factor model. Three of Hurley's factors are not malleable by those wishing to be trusted, so the focus of the research remained on the 7 factors that were malleable:

- Security,
- Number of similarities,
- Alignment of interests,
- Benevolent concern,
- Capability,
- Predictability and integrity,
- Level of communication

These were examined in the case study.

6.5 Data Analysis

The data showed that the formation of the Senior Leadership Team for the Royal Air Force closely followed the 5-point model of Wageman et al (2008). It also showed that in some important ways things had to be done differently. Where Wageman et al insist on excluding from the team all those whose behaviour would

ensure that the team continued to work in the same old ways, the Senior Leadership Team could not do this. It was specifically set up to gather information and views from all parts of wider Defence that senior Royal Air Force officers worked in. As individuals in these areas, they had to be included.

The leader of the Team wanted to include all possible members of the Team by their rank and knew that this would import to the Team behaviours that might prove problematical. The Team was set up in part to deal with these behaviours. It was axiomatic therefore that a way of dealing with the behaviours had to be found. It was written into the Team Manifesto (Torpy, 2007) that these behaviours would not be a reason for exclusion from the Team. Facilitation and support to the Team were the methods used to deal with the issue. One-to-one meetings with the leader of the Team were part of that support, as were interviews by the researcher and external facilitator. Facilitation itself was another part solution. The data showed that in combination the methods used were successful in modifying behaviour; there was a reduction in the use of power to suppress views; a reduction in the sycophantic behaviours of grandstanding to be seen by superiors; and a reduction in simply following superiors' views.

Again, as expected from the literature review, the support to such a large team as the Senior Leadership Team with 34 members, by a leader also busy running a large organisation, was not possible. Though he did carry out a number of one-on-one meetings with his team members, the amount of support he could do was not sufficient. Induction interviews to the Team had to be done by the facilitators. The

interviews, partly carried out as part of the research, were also seen to be useful support to the Team as one-on-one interventions.

On the occasions when the Team carried on full-Team, plenary, sessions, the group size paradox was noticeable. A few extrovert and forceful characters were the ones who dominated discussion and not all the Team participated. However, the facilitation methods used to break the Team into small groups for the discussions were shown to work, ensuring that all members of the Team were able to put forward their point of view and be listened to. Facilitation also helped the full-Team discussions become better over time with more members participating, though this was never the most satisfactory method of discussion.

Because the Senior Leadership Team was attempting to form a team in a strict military hierarchy where all views were considered equal, the issue of power being used in the Team was postulated by the literary review as being an issue that may have to be attended to. The data did show that power was being used to suppress the views of members of the Team who were more junior in the hierarchy. Some members of the Team noticed this and expressed their irritation at it. Leadership and facilitation were successful over time in reducing the effect of this inappropriate use of power, with the majority of the Team feeling that, in the Team, there was a free exchange of views. It was noticeable that trust in their fellow team members was a factor in this change.

Because the Team was specifically trying to set up a culture within it different from that pertaining to the organisation as a whole, the issues of changing culture

were also addressed in the literature review. The review concluded that seeing culture like organisational identity (Cornelisson et al., 2007), as something through which the Team would make sense of what they do, it would be possible to change it.

Though there were few examples that corresponded exactly to the situation with the Senior Leadership Team, it was thought that leadership, facilitation, and trust would be needed to achieve the change. The data showed that the culture did change into the one desired. That is, there was a free exchange of views and most members thought that all views were considered equal. The hierarchical nature of the overall organisation was reduced within the Team, though it did not disappear entirely.

Like Fairtlough's (2007b) example, it also required firm leadership to show the way and to deal with instances of behaviour that moved against the culture change required. Firm, or strong, leadership here meaning an imposition of the hierarchical power of the leader. A somewhat paradoxical conclusion. It needed good facilitation to induce the opportunity for the culture to change and it needed a higher level of trust that reduction in the hierarchy would not affect the Team members.

Lastly, the data was examined to look at the level of interpersonal trust in the Team. Both the qualitative and quantitative data showed that interpersonal trust had built within the Senior Leadership Team. The majority of the members of the Team felt that they could express their views without fear of damaging their standing in the organisation. This had been achieved by the everyday actions (Coleman, 2009) of meeting and getting to know one another as well as the meetings being designed to take advantage of Hurley's (2006) seven malleable factors.

The security of the meetings was emphasised and the level of internal communications within the Team was shown to have increased. The alignment of interests was a successful part of the meetings while the perception of predictability of members and their integrity was improved with better knowledge of each other. Bringing all the senior members of the organisation together allowed the homogeneity of the Team to be seen. And there were instances where benevolent concern was shown. The result of this was summed up by one member of the Team as *'I pretty much trust those people'* (Team member O).

The data demonstrated that a strategic, cross functional, leadership team, where all views are considered equal, had been established and maintained in a military hierarchy. It was brought into being, its members came from all functions of Defence to operate at the strategic level of the Royal Air Force, its members believe that all views are considered equally and it was maintained for the duration of the period of observation. Furthermore, it is still operating in the summer of 2013 and is to be continued under its third leader. The very longevity of the Team suggests it is doing what its leader and members want it to do, their Manifesto states that all contributions should be valued equally and was reaffirmed as being what the Team wanted it to be under its second leader. It is fair to consider this further evidence that it is successful in its aims.

The analysis of the data supports the considerations over Wageman et al's (2008) 5-point model discussed in the literature review. Where the formation of a large team within a hierarchy requires that inclusion of members is necessary, rather

than exclusion of those whose behaviour is not desired, and where the team is asked to adopt a different culture to the one prevailing in the host organisation, the model may need to be modified. The one empirical test of the model in the case study within this research suggests that such a team will need external facilitation. The facilitation is needed to ensure that the group size paradox (Esteban and Ray, 2001) is overcome, that the support to the team can be given by others than just the leader who may be too busy to provide sufficient one-on-one attention to the team.

When the culture of the host organisation is very hierarchical and power based, then both these issues will need attention. Leadership and facilitation can be successful in dealing with the issues of power and ensuring that all views are given the chance to be considered equally. Leadership and facilitation are also necessary to ameliorate the hierarchical behaviours and allow the culture to change. Interpersonal trust must be built to allow the members of the team to become comfortable with operating in the different culture within the team.

Wageman et al's (2008) 5-point model might be considered to need expanding to a 7-point model in these circumstances. The necessary and sufficient conditions to establish an egalitarian team in a military hierarchy are given as the 7-point model derived by this thesis:

- the need for a team;
- a clear purpose;
- the right composition (*excluding or including members depending on the size and nature of the team*);

- the right structure, support, coaching *and facilitation*;
- strong leadership;
- *a compelling reason for a different culture*;
- *and great trust*.

As this research was a single case study, no claim for generalisability is made.

However, the results should be transferable to any large organisation where a large egalitarian senior leadership team in which all opinions are considered equal is required.

6.6 Further Research

As has just been stated, the first area for further research that this research has uncovered is to confirm elsewhere the preliminary conclusions drawn from a single case study. The conceptual thinking in the literature review considered similar issues might arise but more empirical research would be necessary for a generalisable model to be put forward with confidence.

Further research would also be necessary to define what 'large' in respect to teams meant. Although those who refer to teams as small, decision making entities (such as: Sheard et al., 2009) do give some definition of what is meant by small, often referring to numbers in single figures, this research looked at a team that varied between thirty two and thirty four people. It might be reasonable to expect that the seven criteria model developed here would hold true for a team of twenty, it seems

less reasonable for it to hold true for a team of ten even if both were all the top people in their organisation.

As the size of an informational and consultative top team of the sort researched here is likely to vary with the size of the whole organisation, the question of the size of the team is likely to be bound up with the size of the organisation. For the case study here that was approximately 40,000 people. Further research would be needed to see what effect both of these variables would have.

The review of the literature in Chapter 3 postulated that the affective domain of trust was at work from the very beginning of a relationship between two or more people. Though the analysis of the qualitative data confirmed that could be seen to be so, the body of evidence was small. Despite the large volume of literature on trust in general there seems to be little connecting emotional intelligence to trust and still less on the role of the affective domain of trust on interpersonal trust within top teams, let alone large top teams. Further research is needed to explore the effect of the affective domain of trust within top teams.

Again on trust, it was noted in the analysis on the quantitative evidence in Chapter 5 that, although two surveys were measuring different things there was some ostensible conflict in their outcomes. One (Pardey, 2010) measured trust in top people the other (Elliott-Mabey, 2009) measured trust between the top men in the Royal Air Force. However, it would seem that the same person could have great trust in one of these people (in his or her chain of command) yet, at the same time believe that others had little or no trust in that same person. The evidence in this research could

not resolve this issue so it would seem that research targeted to do so would be necessary.

One of the questions asked within this research, in the section of the data analysis in Chapter 5 looking at building interpersonal trust within the Team, was that the competition for resources among members of the Senior Leadership Team would affect the view of those competing for them. Specifically, the person losing such a competition would also lose trust in his fellow Team member who won and that the Team would be less effective as a result. No evidence either for or against this was found in the data and further research would be needed to confirm or discount this hypothesis.

One of the reasons for setting up the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team was to increase trust between the members of the team so that trust could be increased up and down the command chain. Increased trust up and down the command chain was desired to improve the operation of Mission Command within the day-to-day working of the Service. This research concentrated upon the workings of the Senior Leadership Team and showed that increased trust had been achieved there. The affect of that increased trust on trust up and down the command chain would necessarily be a longer-term project and it may be too early to say whether this had had an effect on the workings of Mission Command in the Service. More research would be required in due course to ascertain the rights or wrongs of this premise.

The irony that the seemingly hierarchical part of leadership is needed to create and maintain the culture of the team to be less hierarchical was noted. That is, the

leader of a large team from within a hierarchy needs to exercise strong leadership, or impose his or her power on the team for the more egalitarian behaviours required to manifest. This paradox demands more research.

Within all the above areas that might benefit from further research, it is noted that the Senior Leadership Team, as it was constituted for the period of this research, was exclusively male. What differences there might be to the outcomes in a mixed male/female team or an all female team would be interesting to discover.

6.7 Reflections on the Research

I set out at the start of this Chapter the messy, practical origins of this research. The scramble to meet the practical requirements of improving the collective working of the senior leaders within a large, complex and dispersed organisation. It would have been easier to think through the ideas that I wanted to research, find the research question (or something close to it), review the literature to find the model that could be tested and then test it in the case study. That was not possible in this case and made the research and the writing of the thesis difficult. It may well be that for research such as this into teams at the top of an organisation, where a researcher has access to every meeting and the opportunity to use questionnaire data and interview team members, such a logical sequence of research is never possible. This sort of access is very rare. When it does arise, it needs to be grabbed regardless of the preparedness of the researcher.

My deep immersion in the workings of the Royal Air Force Senior Leadership Team and my long membership of the Royal Air Force also gave me other serious considerations as a researcher into the Team. I set out in Chapter 4 the issues to do with bias arising from these circumstances. Here I reflect my own feelings towards doing the research.

I had no difficulty in critically examining what we were doing with the Senior Leadership Team in order to make it work better. That was very much in the spirit of the action research we were engaged in to improve leadership in the organisation. I found it much harder to criticise the work and achievements of the enterprise as a whole. This was to criticise myself, and much that I had worked hard for a considerable time to set up. Yet once done, and done properly, it gave a clearer insight into what we were really likely to achieve.

Searching for negative comment and thinking hard about what was meant and how the issues raised could be addressed was actually a positive experience for the improvements it would eventually bring. As I looked back into the notes I originally took at the beginning of the journey at the first meetings of the Team, I noted that I had been quite critical and was looking actively for those who were not engaged and could disrupt the proceedings. There was plenty of talk between myself and the external facilitator and the leader of the Team as to how these people could be brought to be more positive and how meetings could be improved to accommodate them. Some ideas were more successful than others.

It is difficult to judge whether there was more negative comment in this period because I was searching for it to address it, or because there was more negative comment anyway. The feeling for the first year was that there were more in the Team who were sceptical of it than positive about its purpose. Some were downright against it. As time progressed, the feeling was that the balance swung in favour of those with a positive view.

This view was reinforced during the writing up of the research as the qualitative data seemed to reinforce that after three years the positive view was the majority view. It was a relief to find this backed up by the quantitative data. It has not been easy to separate myself as a researcher from me as a practitioner; to ensure that my biases as a deeply involved practitioner did not contaminate the research. Yet I feel that I am the better practitioner for the experience.

APPENDIX A

RAF SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM – ‘MANIFESTO’

COMPOSITION

1. The RAF Senior Leadership Team (SLT) comprises all RAF officers of 2* rank or above, including those in non-RAF appointments.

ROLE

2. The role of the SLT is to harness collective experience and knowledge in order to inform the way the RAF is delivered and shaped. It does not in any way undermine the role of the AFBSC or HQ Air Command in RAF governance and delivery respectively. The aim of the SLT is to create greater cross-RAF alignment, generate more effective influence, and interface better with the ‘wider RAF’.

OPERATION

3. The basis for SLT effectiveness is coherent, collegiate behaviour which, through clear example, will gradually permeate through the RAF organisation. Implicit within this construct is the need for SLT members to possess not only the experience that comes with rank and time served, but the requisite developed skills and competencies. The SLT will therefore set the example through personal development activity.

4. Informal Communiqué. The operation of the SLT is captured in the following key point summary:

- The SLT exists to 'air, share and align' thinking.
- As a '2* plus' grouping, the SLT supports formal organisation structures and roles by recognising and strengthening bonds.
- Through exemplar teamwork, harmony and mutual trust it will set standards for behaviour throughout the organisation; acting as a 'beacon' for others.
- Reflecting the nature of the current environment, the SLT will shape vectors for future direction.
- The SLT will work to a 'code of practice' that strengthens internal links and mechanisms for cohesion and cooperation.
- Alignment will be supported by open, honest and vigorous SLT debate.
- SLT work will represent the highest priority for members, and the Team will meet at whatever frequency is appropriate.

5. 'Ten Commandments' & '7 Deadly Sins'.

10 Commandments	7 Deadly Sins
<p>SLT members will...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicate and share knowledge. 2. Value all contributions equally. 3. Do what is best for the RAF and Defence above personal interests. 4. Be visible outside the SLT. 5. Contribute honestly. 6. Listen. 7. Develop subordinates (mentor and nurture). 8. Recognise and address individual weaknesses. 9. Implicitly trust colleagues. 10. Participate. 	<p>SLT members will NOT...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have hidden agendas. 2. Be toxic. 3. Back-stab. 4. Be secretive. 5. Be parochial. 6. Openly support alignment with no intention of delivery. 7. Distance themselves from tough or unpopular decisions.

APPENDIX B

Questions Used in the Interviews of the Senior Leadership Team

1. Do you consider yourselves as a team, as in Senior Leadership Team and if you do, why are you a team, and if you don't, why not?
2. Do you think the SLT meetings so far have been helpful? And if so why or why not?
3. Why do you think the Senior Leadership Team will endure into the medium or long term, or if you don't why not?
4. What do you think that the Senior Leadership Team should discuss?
5. What skills do you think the Senior Leadership Team need to get better at?
6. What behaviours in the Senior Leadership Team do you think are useful or helpful?
7. What behaviours in the Senior Leadership Team do you find counterproductive or unhelpful?
8. Which sessions have you liked or disliked, found useful or not useful and why?

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